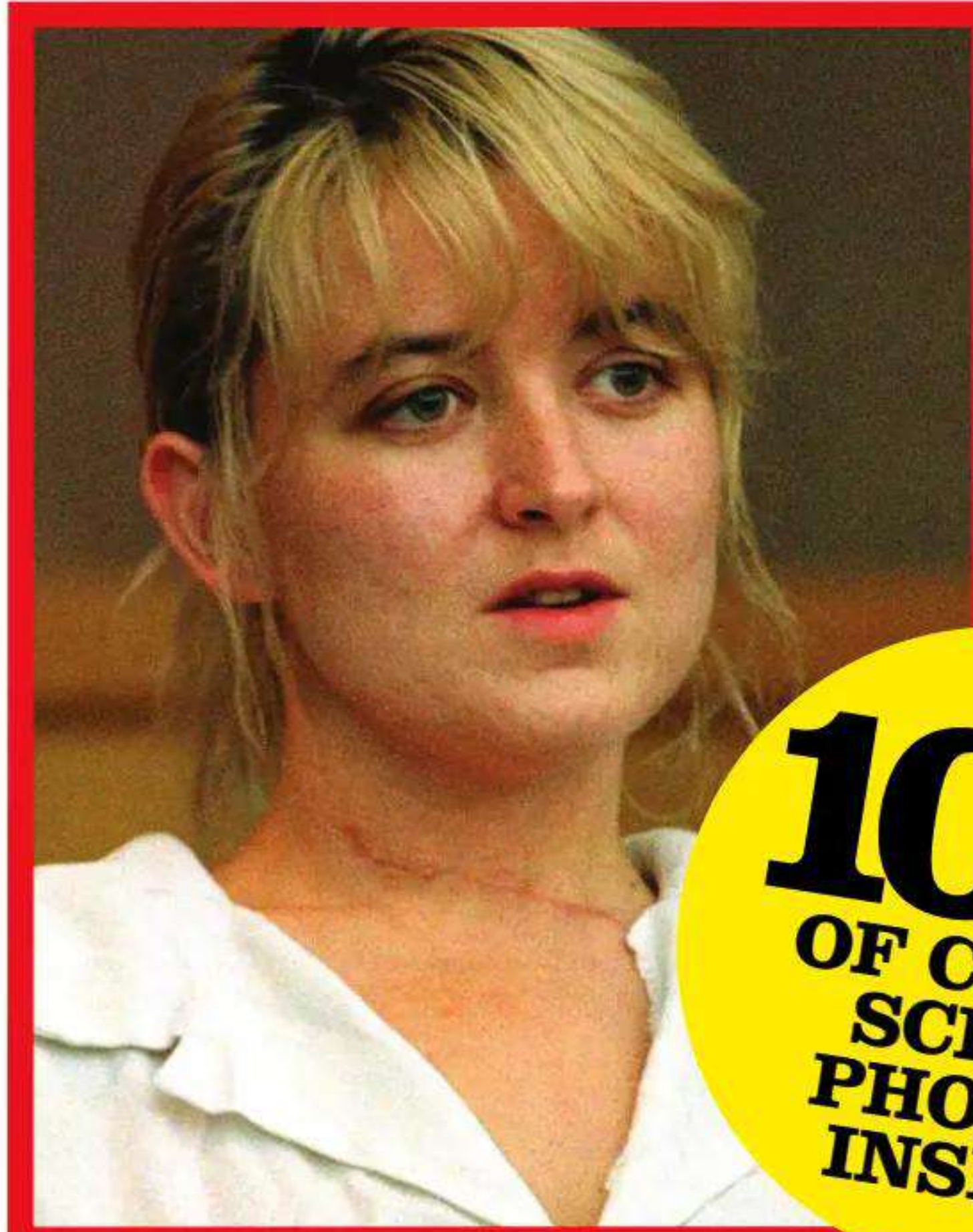
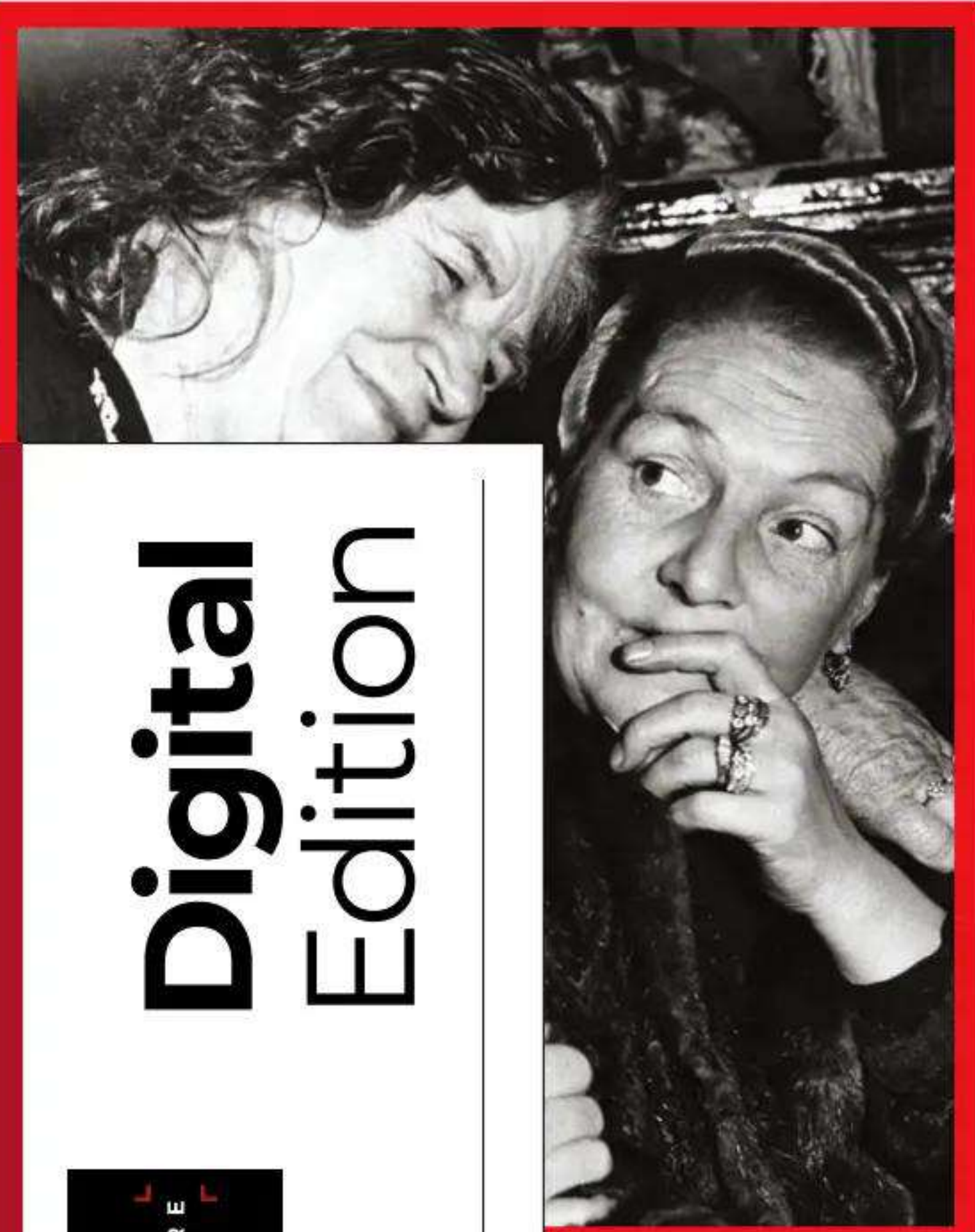


NEW

REAL CRIME

WORLD'S DEADLIEST WOMEN

THE HORRIFYING CRIMES OF CHILD KILLERS,
JEALOUS WIVES, SADISTIC FANTASISTS... AND WORSE



100s
OF CRIME
SCENE
PHOTOS
INSIDE

**Digital
Edition**

FUTURE
SECOND EDITION

TAYLOR SCHABUSINESS • DARLIE ROUTIER • MORGAN GEYSER

WELCOME TO

WORLD'S DEADLIEST WOMEN

Murderers are far less likely to be female than male. In fact, according to a relatively recent study of homicide by the United Nations, only around 1 in 50 perpetrators of murder worldwide were women. That statistic is unlikely to have changed much over the last few centuries. It's an undeniable factor in the assumption of gender made in new murder cases. Considering the archaic female stereotypes that persisted into the 20th century - women coming from Venus, being the "fairer sex", and all that nonsense - it's also why it's so much more shocking when killers turn out to be women. Case in point: moors murderer Myra Hindley,

who lured youngsters away to their death and was an equal, some might say more heinous, part of the torture and killing of at least three children with her partner, Ian Brady.

In this book, we scrutinise some of the most infamous, the strangest and most shocking female murderers from around the world. Their crimes are no worse than equivalent murders committed by men, but they somehow make for an even more chilling read.

「 FUTURE 」

WORLD'S DEADLIEST WOMEN

Future PLC Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA

Bookazine Editorial

Editor **Ben Biggs**

Art Editor **Kym Winters**

Compiled by **Philippa Crafton & Steve Dacombe**

Head of Art & Design **Greg Whitaker**

Editorial Director **Jon White**

Managing Director **Grainne McKenna**

Cover images

Alamy, Getty Images, Shutterstock

Photography

All copyrights and trademarks are recognised and respected

Advertising

Media packs are available on request

Commercial Director **Clare Dove**

International

Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**

licensing@futurenet.com

www.futurecontenthub.com

Circulation

Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production

Head of Production **Mark Constance**

Production Project Manager **Matthew Eglinton**

Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**

Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**

Production Managers **Keely Miller, Nola Cokely,**

Vivienne Calvert, Fran Twentyman

Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce – www.marketforce.co.uk

For enquiries, please email: mfcommunications@futurenet.com

GPSR EU RP (for authorities only)

eucomply OÜ Pärnu mnt 139b-14 11317, Tallinn, Estonia

hello@eucompliancepartner.com, +3375690241

World's Deadliest Women Second Edition (RCB6582)

© 2025 Future Publishing Limited

We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this bookazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards.

All contents © 2025 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number: 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.



FUTURE

Connectors.
Creators.
Experience
Makers.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR) www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Officer **Jon Steinberg**
Non-Executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief Financial Officer **Sharjeel Suleman**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

Part of the
**REAL
CRIME**
bookazine series





CONTENTS

8 SHE MADE THEM SUFFER

WHAT MADE MYRA HINDLEY EVERY BIT AS SADISTIC A KILLER AS HER LOVER AND VILE PARTNER IN CRIME, IAN BRADY?

16 BUCKET LIST KILLER

JEMMA LILLEY HAD A SPECIFIC LIFE GOAL THAT SHE HOPED WOULD MAKE HER AS NOTORIOUS AS THE FICTIONAL MONSTERS SHE IDOLISED

22 CANNIBAL COUPLE

THE STEAMED MEAT WAS IN THE FRIDGE. A DAY BEFORE SHE HAD MET DMITRY AND NATALIA, IT HAD BEEN ELENA VASHRUSHEVA

30 DEATH ROW MOTHER

DARLIE ROUTIER AWAITS EXECUTION FOR THE BRUTAL MURDER OF TWO OF HER CHILDREN. BUT SHOULD SHE BE ON DEATH ROW AT ALL?

38 DOLL-FACED ASSASSINS

MANY HAD FAILED TO KILL THE SON OF NORTH KOREA'S SUPREME LEADER. BUT HIS KILLERS CLAIM THEY WERE DUPED INTO ENDING HIM

46 JUSTICE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

A SERIAL KILLER AVOIDED DETECTION FOR OVER 20 YEARS, BUT THE ACTIONS OF ONE VICTIM FINALLY HELPED TO BRING THE MANIAC DOWN

48 GRANNY RIPPER

TAMARA SAMSONOVA SIMMERED A SAUCEPAN ON HER STOVE. INSIDE, BOILING AWAY, WAS A SEVERED HEAD OF ONE OF HER 11 VICTIMS

52 BABY-SNATCHING "DEVIL IN DISGUISE"

LISA MARIE MONTGOMERY RIPPED BOBBY STINNET'S UNBORN CHILD FROM HER WOMB. DID SHE DESERVE TO BE PUT ON DEATH ROW?

94



16





62



38

58 THE GRUESOME TWOSOME

WHY DID TWO TWINS KILL THEIR OWN MOTHER?

62 SERIAL BABY KILLER

WHAT DROVE NURSE LUCY LETBY TO MURDER SEVEN HELPLESS INFANTS?

68 ONE BAD MOTHER

SHE'S MORE INFAMOUS THAN HER MURDEROUS GANG MEMBERS, BUT WAS MA BARKER REALLY PULLING THE STRINGS?

76 SHE COVERED FOR A KILLER

MAXINE CARR WAS DUBBED THE 'NEW MYRA HINDLEY'. BUT WAS SHE JUST ANOTHER VICTIM OF CHILD KILLER IAN HUNTLEY?



8

86 QUEENS OF THE UNDERWORLD

CRIMINAL MASTERMINDS TILLY DEVINE AND KATE LEIGH BATTLED IT OUT TO BE SYDNEY'S GANGLAND OVERLADY

94 HER LOVER'S HEAD IN A BUCKET

HOW KINKY SEX, PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS AND MENTAL ILLNESS TURNED A CHILLED-OUT NIGHT INTO A GRUESOME BLOODBATH

100 VODOO AXE MURDERER

IN THE DEEP SOUTH IN THE EARLY 1900S A TERROR CREPT AROUND AT NIGHT, BREAKING OPEN SLEEPY HEADS WITH THE FLAT OF AN AXE

108 FOLIE À MUR-DEUX

A RARE CASE OF SHARED PSYCHOSIS LED TO THE SENSATIONAL MURDER OF AN INNOCENT AU PAIR BY HER CRAZED EMPLOYERS

116 SLENDERMAN SACRIFICE

STABBED 19 TIMES BY FRIENDS TO APPEASE A FICTIONAL ENTITY, WHAT HAPPENED TO PAYTON LEUTNER IS FIT FOR A HORROR MOVIE

122 THE BOSNIAN HONEY TRAP

HOW A DATE WITH 'MISS BOSNIA' ENDED WITH AN ATTEMPT ON A MOB BOSS'S LIFE AND THE DOWNFALL OF A DEADLY BALKANS GANG



SHE MADE THEM

SUFFER



THE CHILLING DETAILS OF THE MOORS MURDERERS' CRIMES DOMINATED NEWSPAPERS FOR DECADES, MADE MORE SHOCKING BY THE FACT THAT A YOUNG WOMAN WAS INVOLVED IN THE SERIAL MURDER OF CHILDREN. WHAT MADE MYRA HINDLEY EVERY BIT AS SADISTIC A KILLER AS HER LOVER AND VILE PARTNER IN CRIME, IAN BRADY?

WORDS TANITA MATTHEWS



Downey's mother Ann West became the face of a national campaign to ensure Hindley remained behind bars, for killing her daughter and helping Brady to bury her naked body



Hindley bleached her hair blonde to better match an Aryan ideal, after reading about Nazi war crimes with Brady

Myra Hindley was an unremarkable girl born in Crumpsall, Manchester in 1942, into a working class family. Her relatively deprived upbringing in this austere post-war era was marked only by her abusive father, an alcoholic who would think nothing of giving the back of his hand to his long-suffering wife or using a leather belt on his children. Being raised under the constant threat of violence made an indelible mark on young Hindley's psyche, so she really didn't stand a chance of resisting the thrall of the awful kindred spirit she met less than a year into her adulthood.

At 18 years old she began an equally undistinguished career path working at Millwards, a chemical distribution company. Here she met Ian Brady, an intelligent, older and more sophisticated man than the juvenile boy she had been engaged to just months earlier, her long-term childhood sweetheart Ronnie Sinclair. In a letter to the *Guardian* newspaper in 1995 she expressed how she had been "emotionally immature, relatively unsophisticated and sexually inexperienced," when she met Brady. And for her, it was love at first sight. For Brady it took a little more than a year before he started to look at Hindley as anything other than just another woman working beside him.

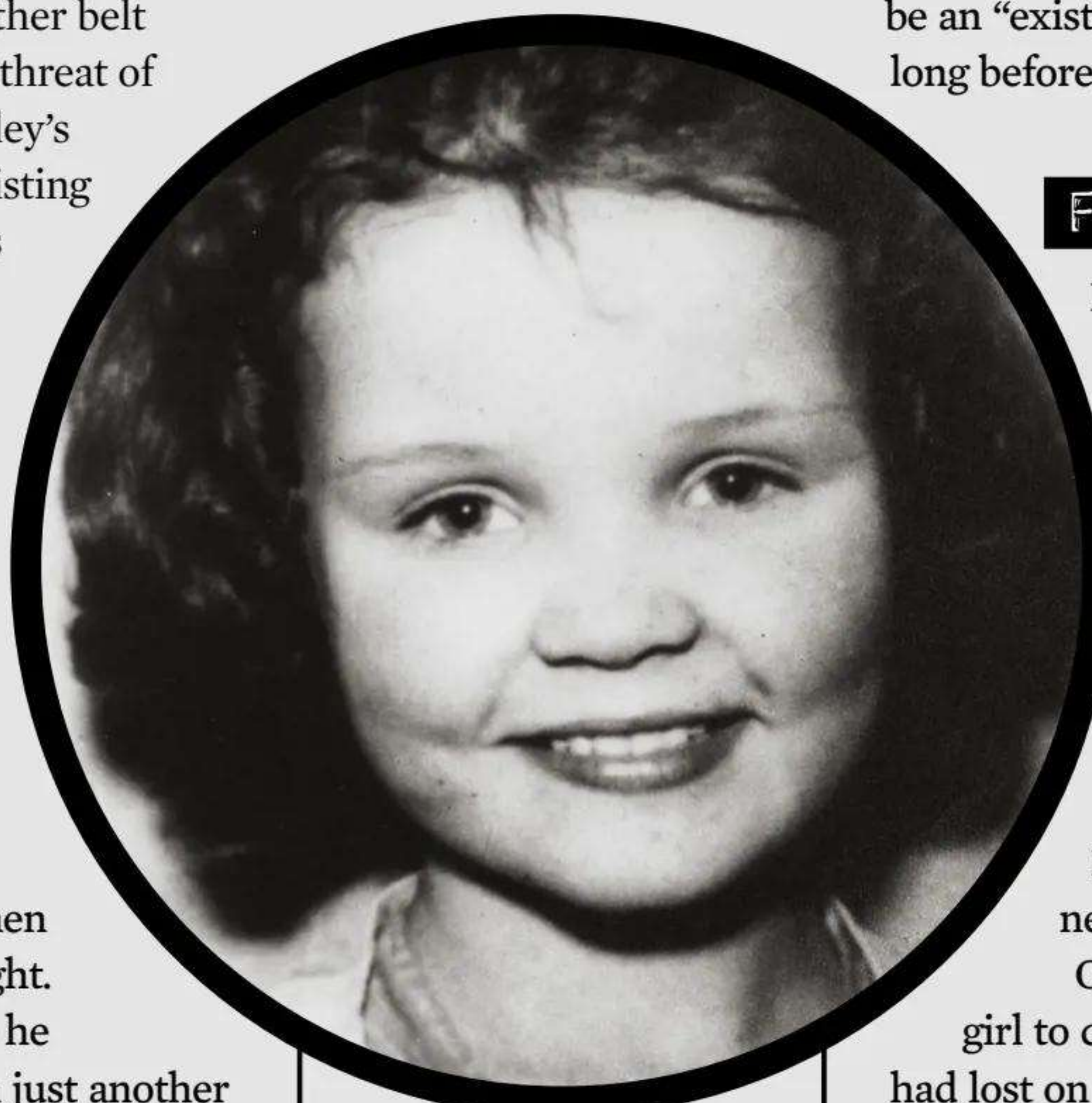
As their bond deepened, Hindley changed her hair and denounced her Catholic faith. She saw no point in life and what it had to offer, which delighted Brady. He offered to rid her of Sinclair, a prospect she readily accepted. But Brady, concerned that the murder could be traced back to them,

abandoned that idea. By June 1963 the pair were living at Hindley's grandmother's house on Bannock Street, where talk of committing 'the perfect murder' began to take over their discussions. Brady told Hindley: "pick up anyone you choose – it is of no consequence to me." He told her it would be an "existential exercise of sheer will. A sacrifice." It wasn't long before the pair had their first victim.

FOLIE À DEUX

Hindley and Brady's versions of how 16-year-old Pauline Reade came to be in their company differ. Regardless, it was Hindley who enticed the young girl into her black van as she sat on Gorton Lane on 12 July 1963. Hindley knew the young girl – she was a friend of her sister's boyfriend David Smith and lived two doors down from him on Wiles Street. Reade left her home at around 745pm to go to a dance at the Railway Workers' Social Club, less than a 10-minute walk away. She was wearing a brand-new pair of white stiletto heels.

On Gorton Lane Hindley pleaded with the young girl to come and help her find an expensive glove she had lost on Saddleworth Moor. For helping Hindley, Reade suffered a degrading humiliation followed by a horrific death. Brady's version of events, detailed in a book by his sole heir and confidant, Dr. Alan Keightley, show that in a flash Brady attacked the young girl when the three of them reached a secluded spot. As she cowered on the ground she pleaded with Hindley for help. Instead Hindley undressed and sexually assaulted her prey, arousing Brady, who in turn joined in. As the daylight faded Brady told the girl to dress herself. When she reached for her gold medallion brooch Hindley snatched it up and taunted her: "You won't be needing that where you're going." Brady struck Hindley across the face for stealing away the suspense of what they



ABOVE Lesley Ann Downey

"TALKING OF COMMITTING 'THE PERFECT MURDER' BEGAN TO TAKE OVER THEIR DISCUSSIONS"

HER PLEA TO LIVE

BRADY AND HINDLEY MADE A SICKENING TAPE AND PHOTOGRAPHED LITTLE LESLEY ANN DOWNEY, BEFORE AND AFTER THEY KILLED HER

The audio tape with the heart-wrenching recording of ten year-old Lesley Downey's murder has never been publicly released. It was played in the court at the Moors Murderers' trial and at the police station: it reduced those in the public gallery and hardened police officers alike to tears. Former police chief John Stalker was a detective sergeant on the case when he first heard it at the police station. In an interview with *The Sun*, he said he was unable to listen to the Christmas song that played in the background as Brady and Hindley tortured the little girl, without feeling a chill down his spine: "When the 16-minute tape was played at the police station before the trial, I saw senior detectives and legendary crime reporters – hard men who had been through the war and seen terrible things – dissolve into tears. The song brings back terrible memories... Nothing in criminal behaviour has penetrated my heart with quite the same paralysing intensity." Ann West, Lesley's mother, had to confirm the identity of the victim on the recording. Naturally, she could barely listen even to the first a minute of it.

[Little Drummer boy by Katherine Kennicott Davis plays]

BRADY - Put it in. Keep it in. Stop it now. Stop it now.

HINDLEY - I'm only doing this and you'll be all right. Put it in your mouth. Put it in. Will you stop it, stop it.

(Lesley whimpers)

HINDLEY - Shut--

BRADY - Quick. Put it in now.

(Lesley whimpers)

(Retching noise)

BRADY - Just put it in now, love. Put it in now.

(Retching)

DOWNEY - *(muffled)* What's this in for?

BRADY - Put it in.

DOWNEY - Can I just tell you summat? I must tell you summat. Please, take your hands off me a minute, please, please – Mummy -please. I can't tell you.

(Grunting)

DOWNEY - I can't tell you, I can't breathe. Oh. I can't - Dad - Will you take your hands off me?

(Brady whispers)

BRADY - No. Tell me.

DOWNEY - Please God.

BRADY - Tell me.

DOWNEY - I can't while you've got your hands on me.

(Mumbling sound)

BRADY - Why don't you keep it in?

DOWNEY - Why? What are you going to do with me?

BRADY - I want some photographs, that's all. Put it in.

DOWNEY - Don't undress me, will you?

HINDLEY - That's right, don't --

DOWNEY - It hurts me. I want to see Mummy, honest to God.

MAN - Put it in.

DOWNEY - I'll swear on the Bible.

BRADY - Put it in, and hurry up now. The quicker you do this, the quicker you'll get home.

DOWNEY - I've got to go, because I'm going out with my Mamma. Leave me, please. Help me, will you?

BRADY - Put it in your mouth and you'll be all right.

DOWNEY - Will you let me go when this is out?

BRADY - Yes. The longer it takes you to do this, the longer it takes you to get home.

DOWNEY - What are you going to do with me first?

BRADY - I'm going to take some photographs. Put it in your mouth.

DOWNEY - What for?

BRADY - Put it in your mouth. Right in.

DOWNEY - I'm not going to do owt.

BRADY - Put it in. If you don't keep that hand down, I'll slit your neck. *(pause)* Put it in.

DOWNEY - Won't you let me go? Please.

BRADY - No, no. Put it in, stop talking. What's your name?

DOWNEY - Lesley.

BRADY - Lesley what?

DOWNEY - Ann.

BRADY - What's your second name?

DOWNEY - Westford. Westford.

BRADY - Westford?

DOWNEY - I have to get home before 8 o'clock. I got to get. . . Or I'll get killed if I don't. Honest to God.

BRADY - Yes.

LEFT Brady made two copies of the tape that captured Downey's cries before he killed her. He kept them and the original along with the sick and twisted pictures he took of the victim in a secret suitcase at Manchester Central railway station



were about to do. He was further enraged when he learned that Hindley hadn't selected a random, untraceable victim but instead a friend of her sister's boyfriend.

Removing a sheath knife that he had tucked away beneath the wrist of his coat, he knelt down and slashed Reade's throat twice. He watched as the blood trickled out of her lifeless body, then buried her out on the moors in her white stiletto shoes. According to Dr. Keightley, the pair were scrupulous in the aftermath of committing a murder. "They used to go back to the house having killed somebody and would burn everything; the shoes, the trousers." This was part of the pair's master plan for their crimes – leave no trace, no connection to the victim. Reade's father became a suspect, and the pair moved onto their next "existential exercise". On 23 November John Kilbride became their next target.

Although the plan had been made weeks in advance to pick up a random stranger, the pair realised that with the world rocked by the John F. Kennedy's assassination the



ABOVE Hindley, circa 1960

day before, it would provide them with a perfect distraction. Kilbride was lured from the streets of Ashton-under-Lyne in Lancashire with the promise of a bottle of sherry for helping to find a lost glove on the moors, according to Hindley, who said she sat in the van wearing a black wig to remain unrecognised. Brady claimed that Hindley sweetly swayed the boy to help her look for her lost glove. Up at Saddleworth Moor the pair began their sickening attack on the boy. Brady sexually assaulted him before strangling him with his bare hands.

Next it was Keith Bennett's turn to suffer. In the summer of 1964 he was picked up by Hindley, who requested that he help her load some boxes from the off-licence. Then came the story of the lost glove. She picked Brady up shortly after that. Brady told Dr. Keightley that, as the trio walked along the moor, they had passed Shiny Brook and followed the streambed that ran parallel to the road. Suddenly Bennett became anxious that his grandmother would wonder where he had got to, but Myra soothed the young boy, assuring him they would return soon. Brady whistled When You Wish Upon A Star. It was the signal that he was about to strike.

As Brady had done with Reade, he grabbed Bennett by the throat and forced him to the ground. Bennett screamed for his life, but the sound only carried across the moors into the hollow distance. Hindley pinned the boy down while Brady sexually assaulted him. Within minutes he had strangled him to death with his bare hands. Brady photographed the young boy's corpse before they buried him.

"BRADY STRUCK HER ACROSS THE FACE FOR STEALING AWAY THE SUSPENSE OF WHAT THEY WERE ABOUT TO DO"



BELOW Brady and Hindley, flanked by officers, are taken from Chester Crown Court in a police van on 7 May 1966, while the jury considers its verdict. In his closing remarks following their trial, Mr Justice Atkinson described the murders as a "truly horrible case"

WHERE IS KEITH BENNETT?

THE WHEREABOUTS OF HIS MISSING VICTIM'S BODY WAS THE REMAINING SECRET THAT IAN BRADY TOOK TO THE GRAVE. OR WAS IT?

When asked why Brady had never revealed where Keith Bennett was buried Dr. Keightley made a startling revelation. "He told them it was three miles into Shinybrook – you could bet it to the inch with Brady. But when he took them to Shinybrook they couldn't find it because of the movement of the peat." Dr Keightley confirmed that he had disclosed the information Brady gave him to Greater Manchester Police during their multiple attempts to find the body, but suggested that the search did not "go far enough" in their endeavours to locate Bennett's remains. When speaking to us, Dr. Keightley said, "I asked him 'did you really try to find

Keith Bennett's body?' and he said 'Yes.' He told me he spent a whole day looking for where Keith Bennett's body but as I say, they underestimated the movement of the peat and he couldn't find it."

Real Crime reached out to the force about the information given to them by Brady and Dr. Keightley on the victim's whereabouts. A Greater Manchester Police spokesperson said: "As with any investigation, if new and credible evidence or information comes to light, we will keep an open mind however, we do not confirm whether specific pieces of evidence or potential evidence forms part of active lines of enquiry."

Sweet little Lesley Ann Downey had gone to the fair in Ancoats with her siblings and friends on Boxing Day 1964. The other children were eager to get home, but Downey wanted to look at the lights just one more time. As she stood mesmerised by the twinkling bulbs Hindley moved in for the kill. Feigning innocence, she dropped her groceries. Downey saw and tried to help. With a beguiling smile, Hindley asked the girl to help her take the boxes home to 16 Wardle Brook Avenue. Brady, Hindley and her grandmother had moved to the new home earlier that year, re-housed as part of the post-war slum clearances in the city. Hindley's grandmother was at a relative's house for the night, leaving the house empty.

Once inside the house, Downey was forced to undress herself. She was shy and frightened, but – ruthless paedophile that he was – Brady gagged her and took pictures of the girl in a variety of positions before and after her death. A 16-minute tape captured her final terrifying moments with the Moors Murderers. "Brady raped her," Dr. Keightley told **Real Crime**. Brady told him it was Hindley who strangled the girl with a nylon cord, which she carried around for months afterwards as a macabre trophy. Downey's mother always believed it was Hindley who had killed her daughter, based on the tape of her daughter's cries for help. The next day her body was taken to the moors and buried in a shallow grave.

Life at Wardlebrook Avenue was working out well for Brady: Hindley's sister Maureen had married David Smith, and the pair were living nearby in Underwood Court. Brady became close friends with Smith, who was "in awe" of him. Brady soon became aroused by the idea of bringing Smith into their murderous fold. A month before what would be his final murder, Brady and Hindley visited Smith and Maureen at their home. With the women asleep after an evening of drinking, Brady turned to Smith and asked, "Are you capable of murder?" He went on to tell him, "I've done it. I've killed three of four... You don't really believe me do you? Their bodies are buried on the moors... you and Maureen were sitting near one of them," he taunted, reminding him of an outing to the moors they had taken previously. Smith thought it was all talk. A few days later, again under the influence of alcohol, Brady told him: "I'll do another one. You don't believe me... it will be done."

When Smith faced eviction because of crippling debt, Brady told him he would lend him the money by "rolling a

ABOVE In 2009 Greater Manchester Police officially gave up the search for Keith Bennett. They said, "only a major scientific breakthrough or fresh evidence would see the hunt for his body restart"

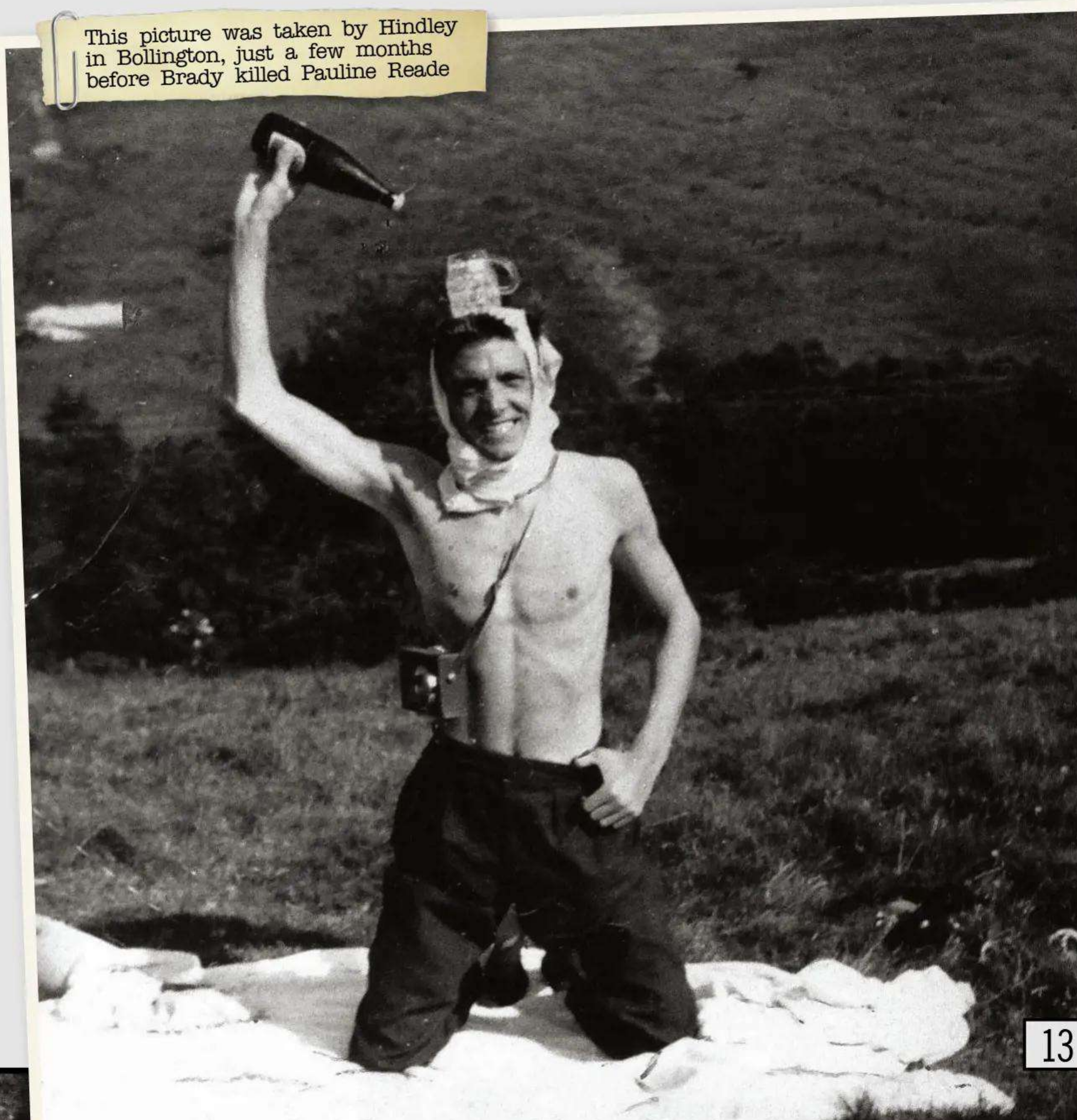
queer", meaning he would entice a homosexual back to his place under the pretence of having sex and then rob him. In the 1960s homosexual acts were illegal, so victims rarely went to the police. Brady's victim didn't stand a chance.

"There's No Man Here"

On the evening of 6 October 1965, Hindley drove Brady to Manchester Central train station where he picked up 17-year-old Edward Evans, who had been stood up by his friends. Back at Wardle Brook Avenue, they began to unwind, and Brady insisted that Hindley fetch Smith from his home and bring him to join the festivities. When Smith arrived Brady brought him into the kitchen and disappeared momentarily.

All of a sudden Smith heard a blood-curdling scream and his sister-in-law shouting for his help. In the lounge Smith witnessed Brady attacking Evans with the flat of an axe. His

This picture was taken by Hindley in Bollington, just a few months before Brady killed Pauline Reade



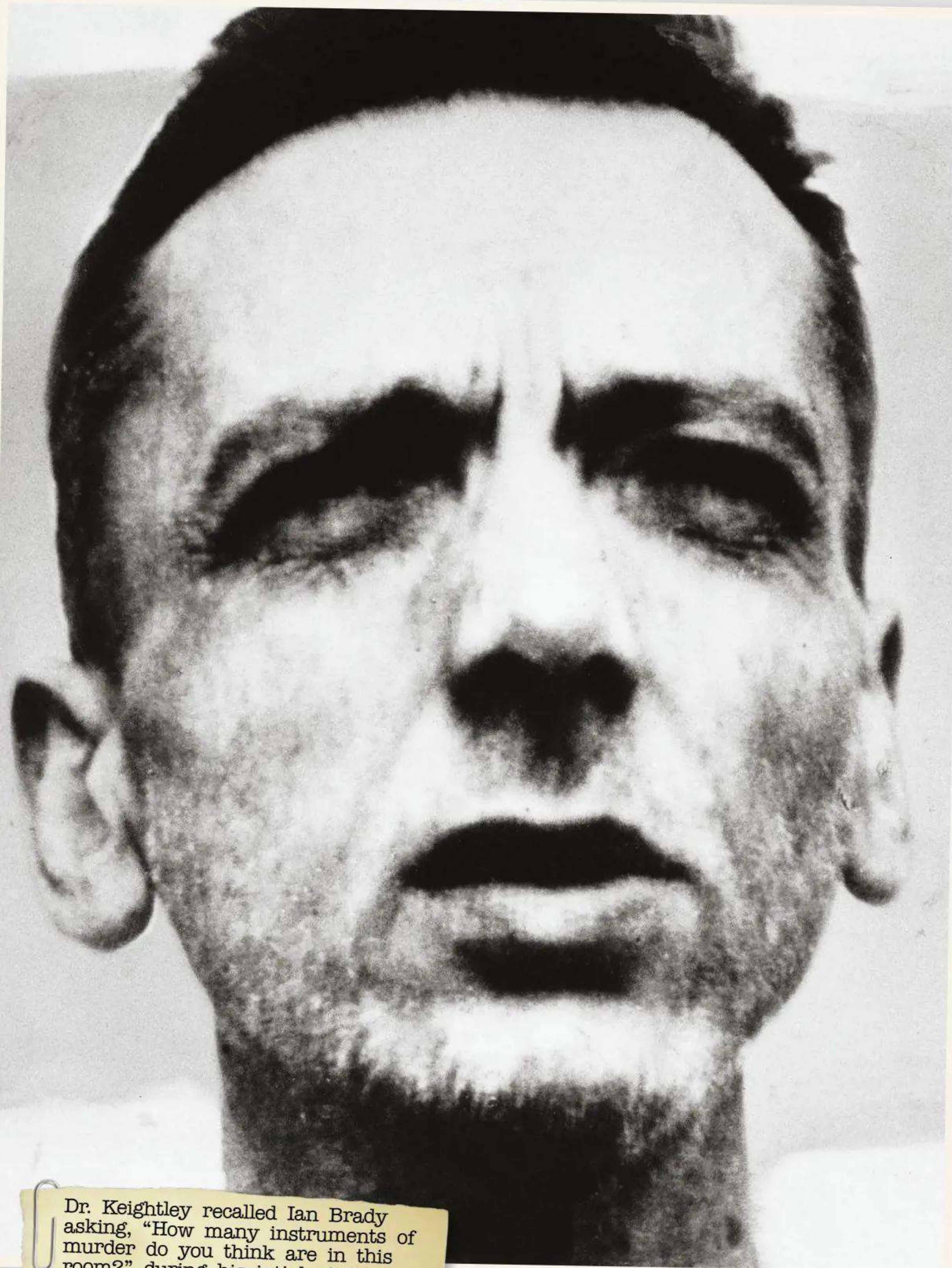
NAZIS, SADISM AND A CHRISTMAS CAROL

FOR DECADES THE MEDIA SPECULATED ON THE TEXTS THAT OCCUPIED BRADY'S BOOKSHELF AND MIND, BUT A CLOSE LOOK AT HIS LIBRARY OPENED UP A NEW CHAPTER ON THE KILLER

Brady was a very well read individual both in and out of captivity. From poems to literary classics, he was very opinionated and extremely literate. The Russian author Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* was a personal favourite of Brady's for many years. He also read *A Christmas Carol* every Christmas and enjoyed the works of William Blake. But what about the infamous books the media reported for decades as being central to the murders? According to Sir Elwyn Jones, the attorney general during their trial, the French writer Marquis de Sade was a "major influence" on Brady due to his introduction of sadism into sexuality. Brady dismissed this as "nonsense," recalling how he had read it but was "bored rigid" by parts of it.

For decades the press has reported how the Moors Murderers would speak and read German to each other, enthralled by Nazis and Adolf Hitler's ideals. But Dr Keightley commented that Brady was in fact not fascinated with Nazism at all, and that the killer, aware of these rumours, had once told him that it was the public's way of "projecting their guilt for their own fascination and obsession with Nazism, Hitler and crime in general." However, in a letter written to Dr. Keightley in 1993, Brady had commented how he felt Hitler was the only politician who could "roar and be believed".

Brady's own book, *The Gates of Janus: Serial Killing and its Analysis* was published first in the US in 2001, with the book's profits going to his elderly mother Peggy and to charity. The publication of the book in the UK was temporarily blocked after it spurred outrage from many of the victims' families, but Winnie Johnson believed that the book potentially held clues to her son's whereabouts. Brady has requested in his final wishes that his autobiography be published in full and named *Black Light* after the sensation he says drove him to kill his victims.

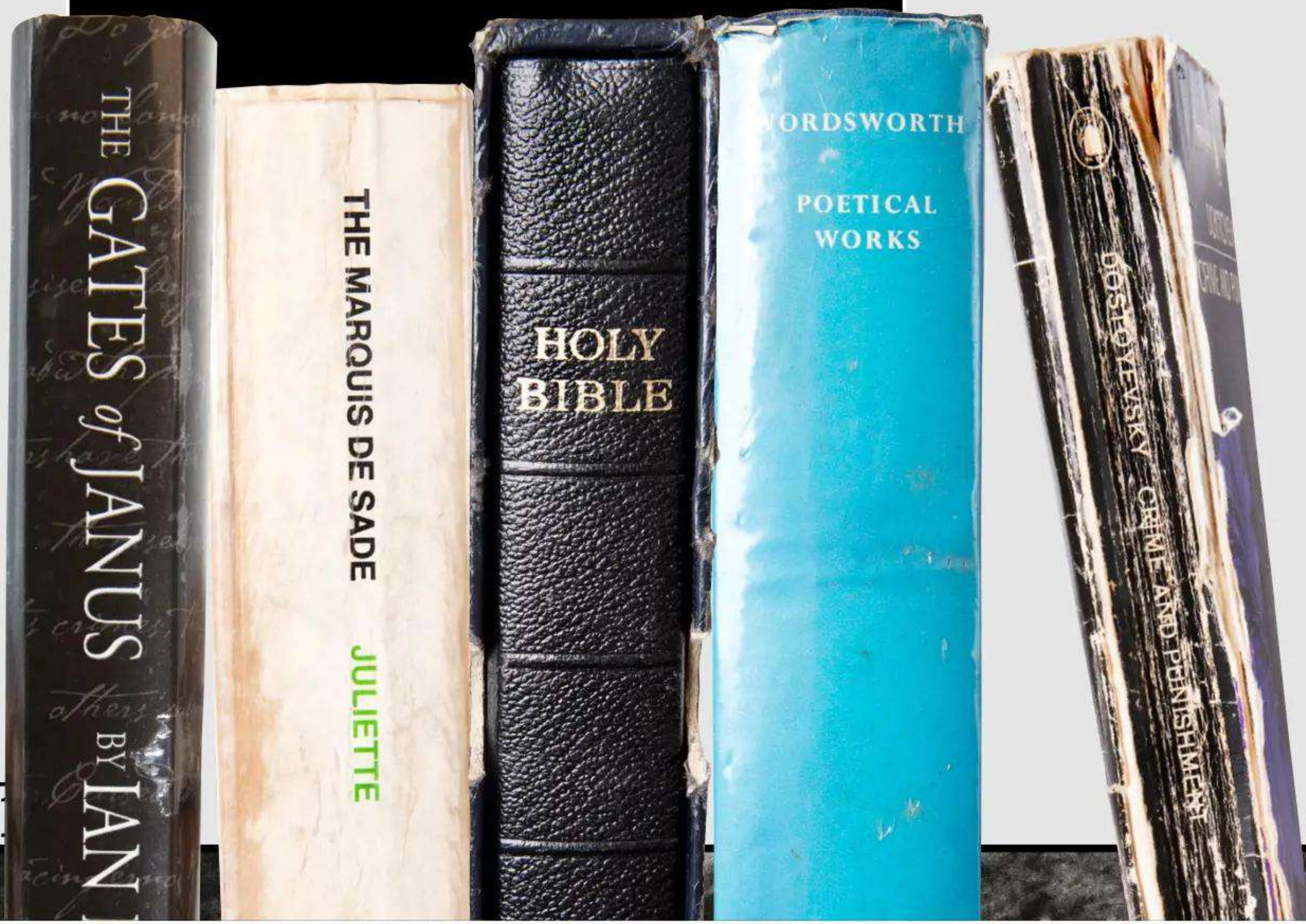


Dr. Keightley recalled Ian Brady asking, "How many instruments of murder do you think are in this room?" during his initial visit

"TO WHOM SHOULD I APOLOGISE,
AND WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD
IT MAKE TO ANYONE?"

skull was smashed 14 times with the hatchet before Brady strangled him with an electrical cord. Smith was handed the axe – leaving his fingerprints on the handle – and forced to help bundle and move the body into the same room where Downey's body had lain in waiting before it was buried. At around 4am Smith told the pair he had better go home to Maureen. He forever considered himself lucky he had been allowed to leave, fearful that if he had not convinced Brady he was on board he would have been murdered too. Once safely inside his own home 300 yards away he began to violently retch, and with his wife at his side, having heard the commotion of her husband returning home, he told her what he had witnessed.

It was 6.07am when Constable Keith Edwards answered the phone to hear a man on the other end of the line: "My name is David Smith. I'm speaking from Hattersley... There's been a murder." After hearing Smith's outrageous account of what had happened, more than 30 policemen surrounded





ABOVE-LEFT A canvas screen surrounds the shallow moorland grave where the body of John Kilbride was discovered, in 1965

ABOVE-RIGHT Forensics dig on Saddleworth Moor on October 2022, at a site containing the body of what was thought to be Keith Bennet. Ultimately, no human remains were found

Wardle Brook Avenue. They were waiting for Brady to leave for work, but when there was no sign of him, Superintendent Bob Talbot donned a white coat from a nearby bakery deliveryman, and armed with a basket of fresh bread he approached the front door of number 16. Hindley answered, which threw the officer: he hadn't been expecting to see a woman there, but he persisted: "I am a police superintendent and I have reason to believe there is a man in the house," he said. "There's no man here," came Hindley's reply. Meanwhile Brady sat in the living room writing a sick note to his boss.

Undeterred, Talbot brushed past Hindley and into the room where he found Brady. Upstairs sat Hindley's grandmother sipping tea, unaware of what had taken place the evening before. A second bedroom was locked. Hindley tried to throw the policeman off the scent of his suspicion, but Brady broke the spell: "A fight got out of hand last night. It's upstairs." Inside the room the police found Evans' body bundled in a heap.

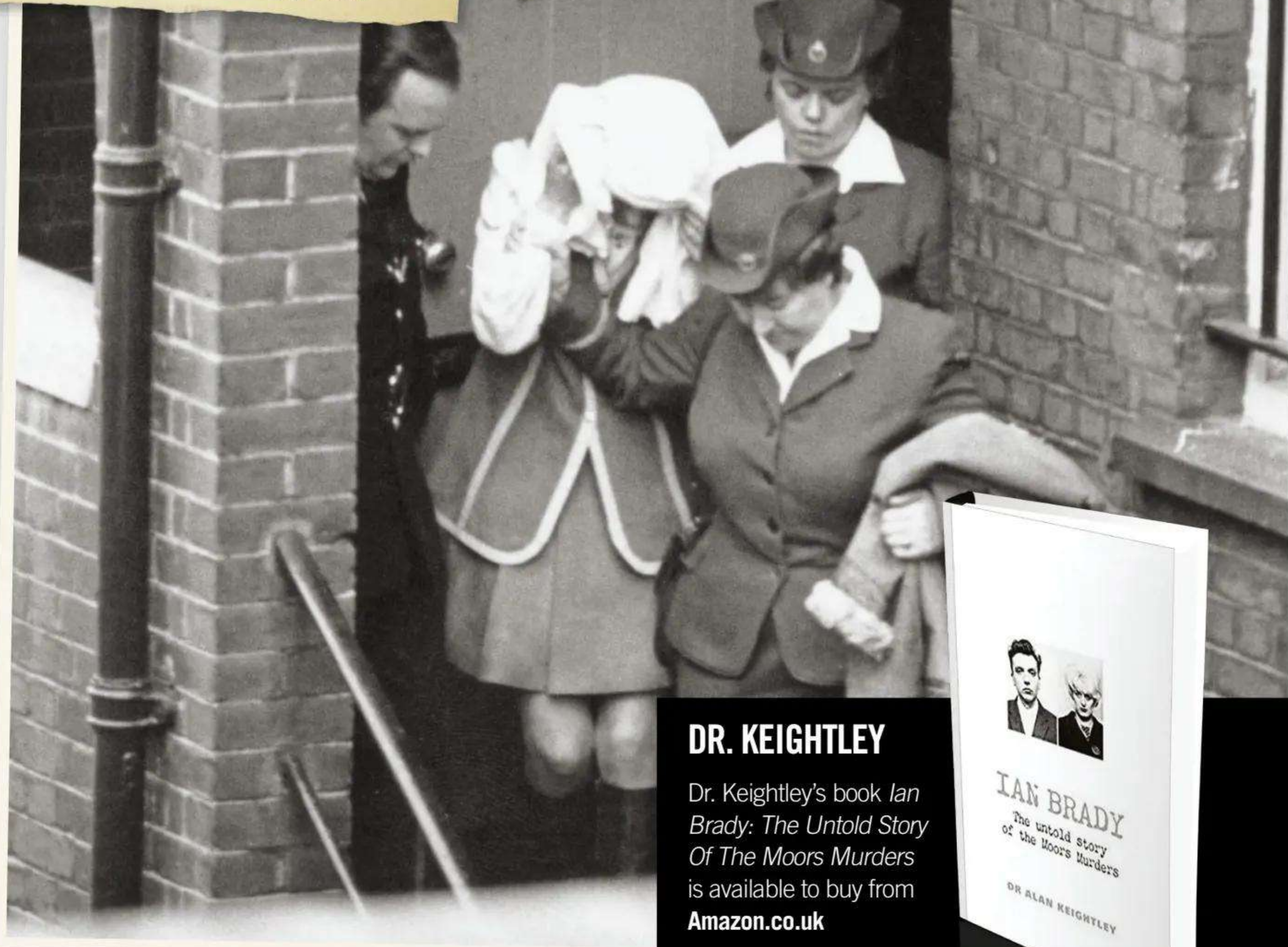
Brady was taken in for questioning, where he did his best to remove Hindley from the murder and pin the accomplice status on Smith. Although police charged Brady with Evans' murder, it took another four days before they went to arrest Hindley, despite questioning her days earlier. She used the four days to gather and destroy as much evidence as she could, tossing important documents into the fire. Brady later told Dr. Keightley that these documents could have helped to locate Keith Bennett's body. On 11 October 1965 Hindley was finally arrested over Evans' murder.

A ticket stub retrieved from the spine of Hindley's Bible sent the police to Manchester Central, where they discovered a hidden suitcase in the left-luggage lockers. Inside were photographs taken of Downey, the tape of her last few minutes alive and a plethora of incriminating evidence in relation to the murder of Kilbride. Some also pointed to the murders of Bennett and Reade. Thanks to Smith's cooperation with the police and the testaments from their 16-year-old neighbour, who had gone to Saddleworth Moor with them on many occasions, Downey's body was the first

of the victims to be discovered shortly after Brady's arrest, followed by Kilbride's a few days later.

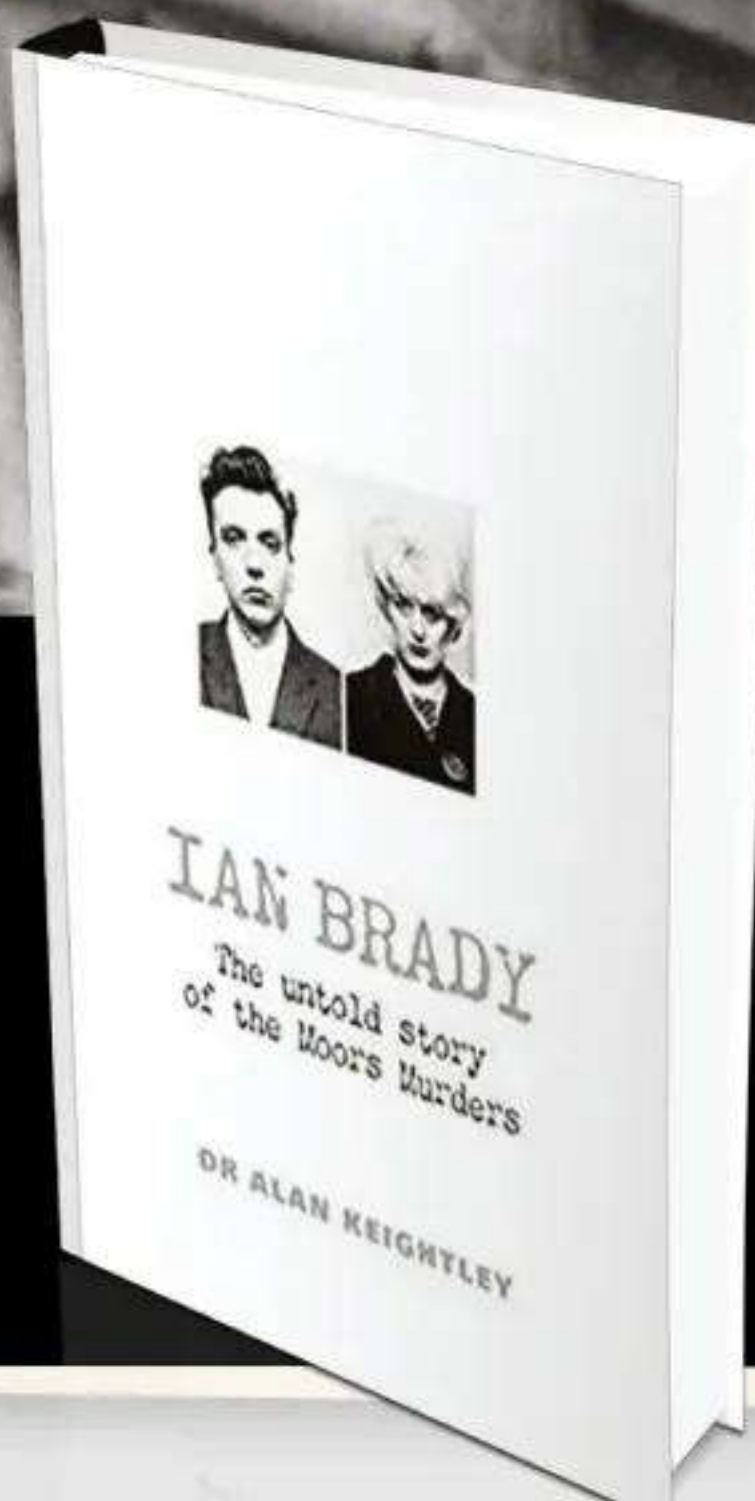
It would be more than 20 years until police would find Reade's decomposed body. They would never bring Bennett's remains home to his mother. At the time of the trial in April 1966, capital punishment had only just been abolished in England. Brady and Hindley pleaded not guilty to the murders of Evans, Downey and Kilbride, but Brady was given three life sentences, Hindley was given two life sentences and a seven-year charge for harbouring Brady knowing he had killed Kilbride.

Hindley with prison officers at Holloway women's prison, London, in 1974. Holloway closed in 2016, 14 years after Hindley died



DR. KEIGHTLEY

Dr. Keightley's book *Ian Brady: The Untold Story Of The Moors Murders* is available to buy from [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk)



- Go skydiving
- Live in Australia ✓
- Get married ✓
- Hold a Python
- Publish a book ✓
- Make a film
- ~~Meet~~ ^{Hang!!!} Freddy Krueger ✓

KILL
SO MEON ME



BUCKET LIST KILLER

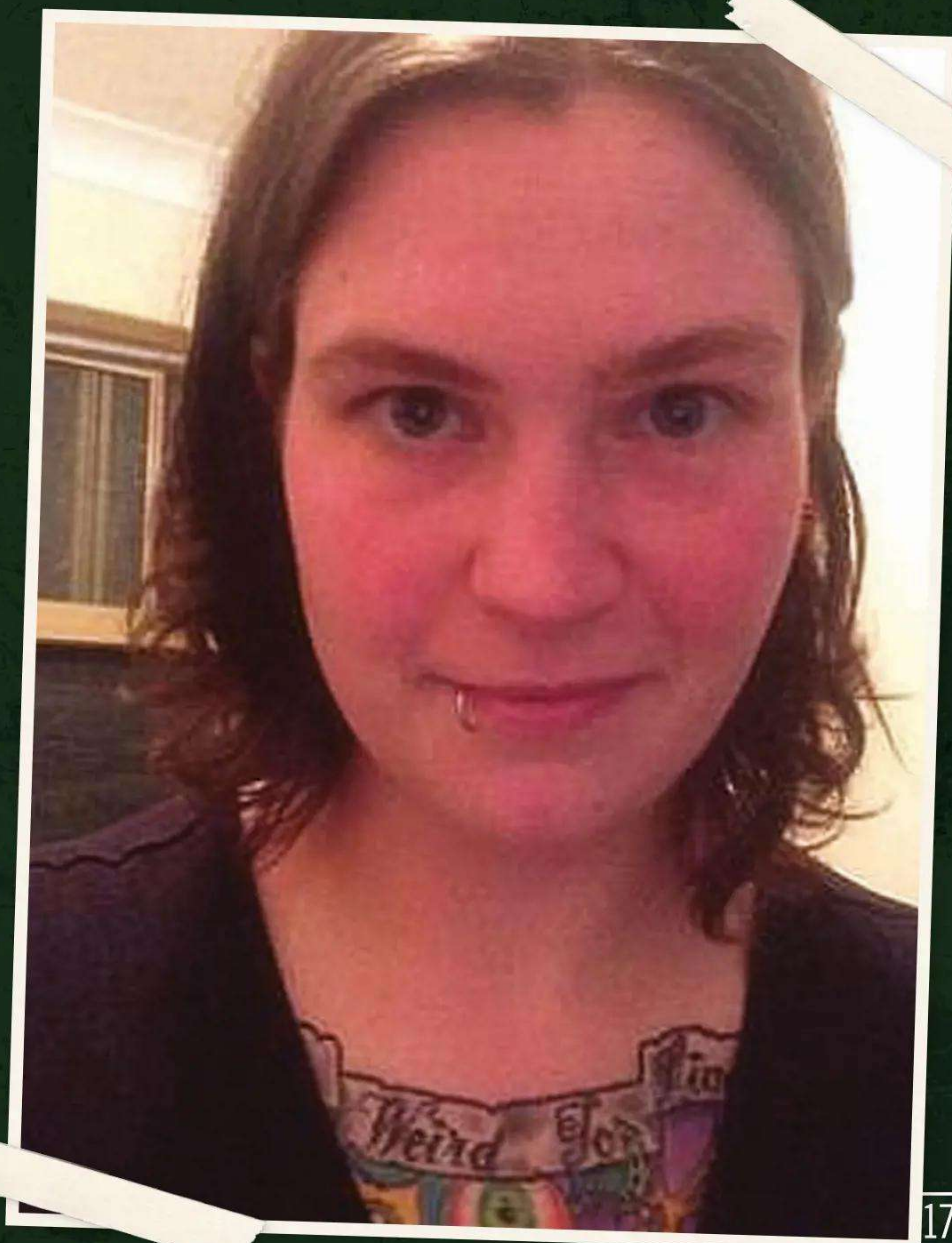
SERIAL KILLER-OBSSESSED JEMMA LILLEY HAD A VERY SPECIFIC LIFE GOAL IN MIND, ONE THAT SHE HOPED WOULD MAKE HER AS NOTORIOUS AS THE FICTIONAL MONSTERS SHE IDOLISED

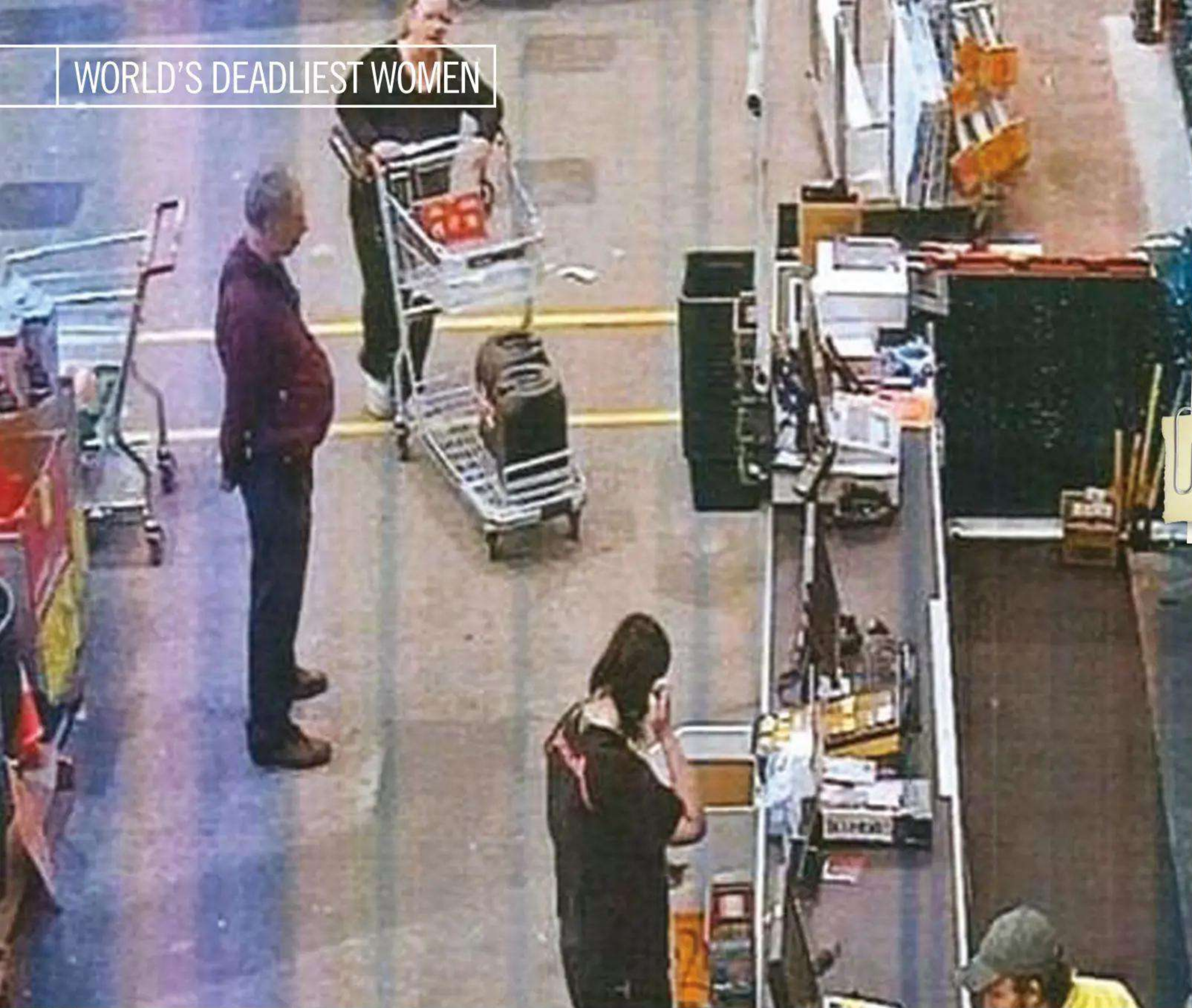
WORDS TANITA MATTHEWS

The age of 25 can be a significant milestone – for some it can signify the first stages of adulthood, something worth celebrating as people find more security in their jobs, relationships and lives. For some it can prompt a will for change and to seek new experiences – a tattoo maybe, or some travelling. But for British-born Perth resident Jemma Lilley, her bucket list of ‘Things To Do Before You’re 25’ had one very sinister goal at the top of it – murder. The twisted, serial killer-obsessed, self-published horror author and her submissive partner Trudi Lenon plotted a slaying to satisfy their sadomasochist desires, targeting a vulnerable adult at their Australia home on a winter’s afternoon in 2016. Their pairing had been a catalyst for murder. Text messages showed a warped relationship where Lenon was happy to “submit” herself to her younger friend’s desires. In the end their plotting and scheming only saw them try to blame each other for what happened inside the slasher-shrine of a home they dubbed ‘Elm Street’.

BLURRED LINES

As a child and young woman growing up in her British home in Lincolnshire, those who knew Lilley recalled that she was socially awkward from the start, with an eerie obsession with serial killers. It wasn’t enough for Lilley to simply be fascinated by the crimes themselves, Lilley admired the killers, studying their modus operandi in intricate detail. Her own stepmother described her as “sinister” and “odd”. To Lilley, horror film foe Freddy Krueger, a phantom killer who stalked and murdered children in their dreams in the 1984





Jemma Lilley spent five days on the witness stand and denied murdering Aaron Pajich, insisting she'd fallen asleep for three hours after her flatmate arrived home with the victim



Trudi Lenon became Lilley's "obsequious and sycophantic mate" helping to carry out the murder that the pair had spent weeks fantasising about



Robert Englund and his character Freddy Krueger in *Nightmare on Elm Street* became strange heroes to Lilley

ABOVE-LEFT In the weeks leading up to their 'thrill kill' the pair were spotted in hardware stores purchasing items to help pull off their planned killing, including saws and 100 litres of hydrochloric acid

ABOVE-RIGHT According to the prosecution, the 18-year-old victim Aaron Pajich "still inhabited a child's world" and enjoyed computer games, which Lenon took advantage of as a means to lure him to his death

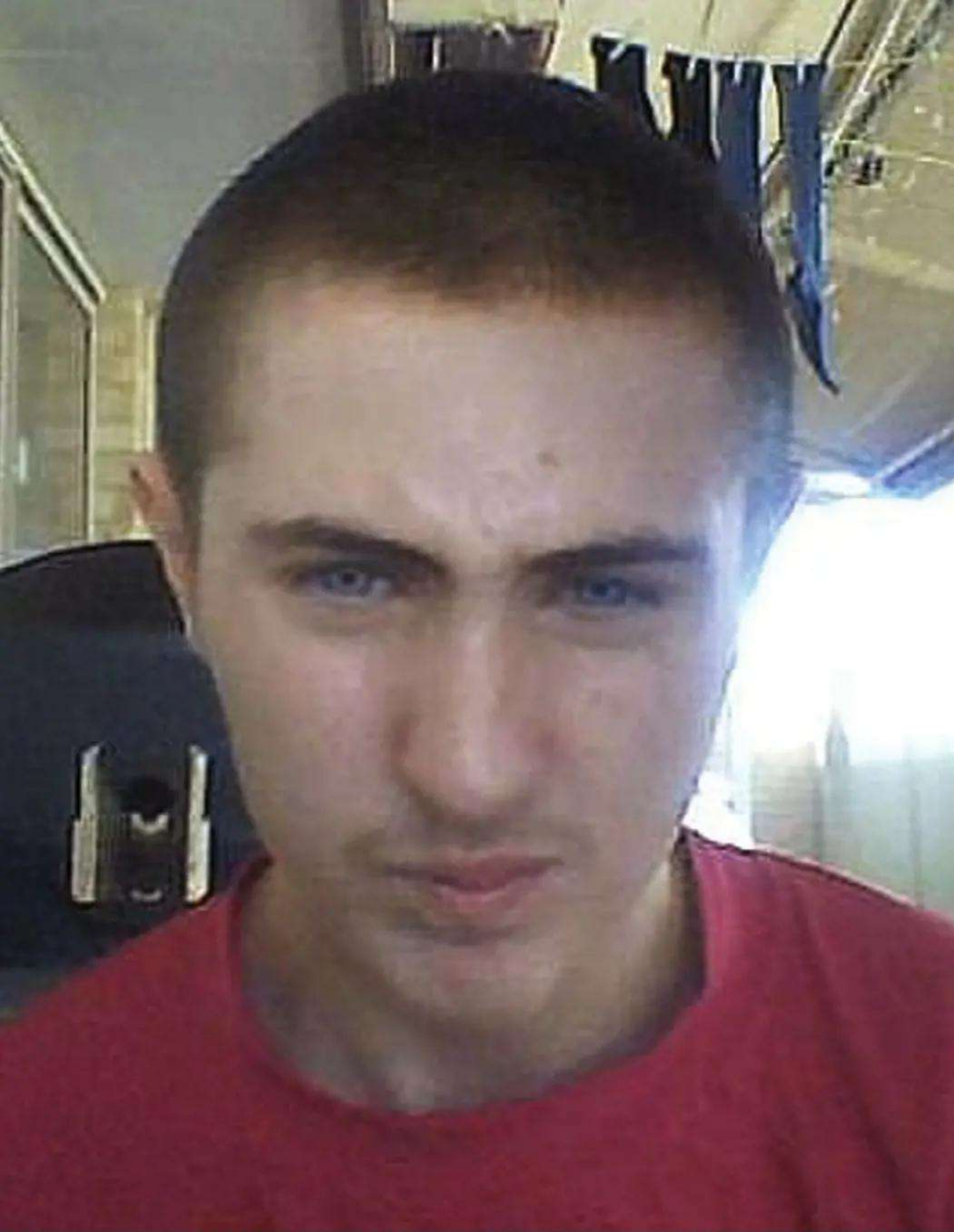
slasher flick *Nightmare On Elm Street*, was her hero. The actor who played him, Robert Englund, became like a father figure to her.

For five years, between the ages of 11 and 16, Lilley attended Rutland's Casterton Business and Enterprise College, where she studied game design. Although she was reportedly dyslexic, her murder-obsessed mind spilled onto the pages of a book she self-published under the alias 'Syn Demon'. The content of *Playzone* is horrifically gory, sitting somewhere between a *Saw* movie and the dark musings of Sylvia Plath, minus the craftsmanship behind either. Lilley's stepmother later admitted that while she tried to encourage Lilley's project, she had serious issues with the content and, when listening to the excerpts her stepdaughter would read aloud, she struggled to feel comfortable, imploring her "to see someone" when Lilley gleefully went on about her protagonist's lack of empathy for his victims and the torture he inflicted on them. Lilley told a friend that before she turned 25 she wanted to take someone's life – a macabre goal for anyone to set, but for Lilley it was "at the top" of her list.

In 2010, 18-year-old Lilley travelled to Australia on a two-year working holiday visa. She later moved to Perth. In need of a visa granting her permanent residence Down Under, she wed her friend's homosexual brother Gordon Galbraith, who she claimed was "identical" to serial killer clown John Wayne Gacy, who raped and murdered more than 30 young men in the 1970s. Lilley swapped the traditional fairytale nuptials for a more personal theme: pictures of her father and other guests show them dressed in Krueger's iconic striped jumper and fedora as part of the dress code. Her husband, who she nicknamed 'Gacy', died in 2014.

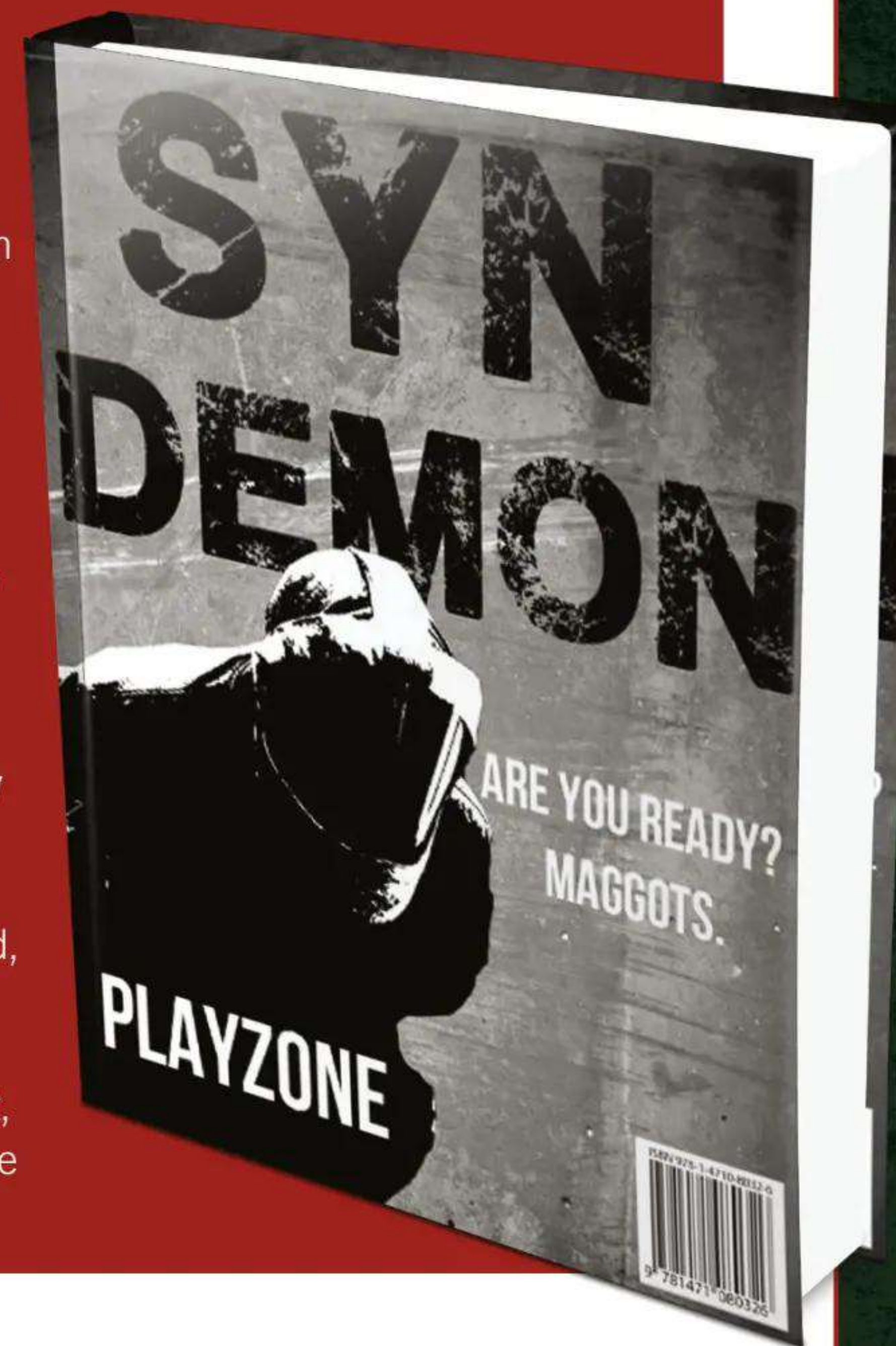
By 2016 Lilley was working as a late-night shelf stacker and manager in a supermarket. Through her friend Kim Taylor she was introduced to Trudi Lenon, a 42-year-old mother of three who was newly single. The pair became

ELM ST



MIND ON MURDER

Lilley's book *Playzone* gave some insight into her dark and twisted thoughts. It tells the fictional story of a protagonist named SOS, named after the notorious Son of Sam killer who was convicted of shooting eight people in the US in the 1970s. For 200 pages, littered with spelling and grammar mistakes, SOS and his merry band of 'maggot' followers aim to carry out long, torturous videos of their slaughters in a bid to be the best and most creative killer of them all. SOS rules the roost, bringing his students into his lair to learn from his vicious live slaughter shows. One particularly sickening excerpt describes how a victim is coshed over the head with a heavy instrument before waking up in the killer's lair, his tongue and teeth removed from his mouth and his lips sewn up with the "drained, strained, platted intestines" of his dead wife, who had fallen prey to the killer earlier in the story. It's a juvenile's violent fantasy cringefest, made sinister purely by the reality of the crime the writer later committed.



an unlikely duo, despite the two-decade age gap, bonding over a desire to lose weight. Lenon had belonged to a BDSM community, giving herself the role of a 'submissive' named 'Corvina'. Lilley gave her new friend a copy of her book and while she was not part of the BDSM community, Lilley's violent mind was a driving force behind the pair's relationship. With Lenon her submissive counterpart, she could finally begin to talk about the violent fantasies she had struggled to suppress all these years.

In May that year, Lilley, her new friend and her children moved in together in Orelia, a suburb on the outskirts of Perth. As a welcome gift, Lilley presented her new flatmate with an ornamental dagger.

“ SHE TOLD A FRIEND THAT BEFORE SHE TURNED 25 SHE WANTED TO TAKE SOMEONE'S LIFE — A MACABRE GOAL FOR ANYONE TO SET, BUT FOR LILLEY, IT WAS 'AT THE TOP' OF HER LIST ”

The home was a shrine to Lilley's serial killer idols. Horror film paraphernalia was strewn throughout the rooms, including a rubber Chuckie doll, an iconic horror character from Don Manici's 1988 horror series *Child's Play*. Frightful images and dark artworks adorned the walls while ornamental knives could be found displayed proudly. On the gate outside was a small plaque reading "Elm Street" paying homage to her favourite film. While you should never judge a book by its cover, Lilley's home was a distinctive exception.

ONE, TWO, LILLEY'S COMING FOR YOU

Disturbing messages exchanged between Lilley and Lenon on 31 May 2016 showed Lilley's murderous urges stirring: "I cannot shift this belief that the world has become not only

ready for me but it needs me to be ready." Lenon and Lilley would call each other by pet names that solidified their dominator/submissive relationship. Lenon later told police that the messages were just the pair flexing their characters for a future book they were planning. To go further with their violent fantasy they needed a victim. Lenon suggested an 18-year-old man that she had met during a college course, a young man who had become good friends with one of her teenage sons – Aaron Pajich.

The student in their sights suffered from Asperger's syndrome, loved computer games and was a trusting person. Their plan began to take effect as early as three weeks after they first moved in together. Lilley needed to do little

research – she had gleaned enough information from her years of studying serial killers to know what she had to do. The pair visited different hardware stores, purchasing a collection of tools such as a circular saw, bleach, cement, a large barrel and knives. They purchased 100 litres of hydrochloric acid, some of which was used to experiment inside Elm Street, dissolving joints of meat in saucepans in the kitchen. Was this a scary prelude to what was in store for their intended victim? The walls of a tiled floor room were decked out with tarpaulin, and a trolley cut down to its wheels was placed in the corner.

On the morning of 13 June 2016 Lenon called Aaron, having dropped her children at school, asking for him to come over to install a computer game for her. Aaron willingly agreed and arranged to meet her at a local shopping centre that afternoon. When he arrived, Aaron waved goodbye to



DREAMING UP A NIGHTMARE

MESSAGES REVEAL LILLEY AND LENON'S
RELATIONSHIP OF DOMINATION AND
SUBMISSION FUELLED THEIR SICK FANTASY

LILLEY: I feel as though I cannot rest until the blood or flesh of a screaming victim is gushing out and pooling on the floor... I cannot shift this belief that the world has become not only ready for me but it needs me to be ready.

LENON: It is definitely time. I am ready. You are ready.

LILLEY: I am seeing things I haven't seen before. I'm feeling things I haven't felt before. It's incredibly empowering. Thank you.

LENON: You're welcome SOS.

LENON: I will fear you, but respect you. I would not challenge you. I would naturally submit to you. My fear would be because I am in awe and because I respect what you are and that I see you as my dominant.

LILLEY: 100% perfect

ABOVE-LEFT Together Lilley and Lenon constructed a separate room that would serve a gruesome purpose after they had murdered their victim

ABOVE-MIDDLE Lilley's home was a slasher-shrine to horror characters and serial killers, with Chuckie and Jigsaw dolls and images of villains like the Joker. Lilley wasn't content with fiction – she wanted to see the horror in real life. A missing section of carpet can also be seen, which had been cut out and concealed by a sofa after Aaron's blood had soaked into it

ABOVE-RIGHT Inside the pair's 'Elm Street' home, police discovered multiple knives, saws and weapons. They also found several bloodstains

the friend who had dropped him off, telling them "Goodbye and God bless." CCTV at Rockingham Mall captured the 18-year-old Aaron arriving at around 9am and walking off with Lilley and Lenon. Arriving at the pair's residence at around 10.30am, the couple's security camera captured the last movements of Aaron before he was killed.

There is some doubt over how the events unfolded, but what investigators pieced together with Lenon's testimony gives a picture of a violent attack. Once inside the home Aaron was served a cup of coffee and sat at the computer ready to help Lenon. Sneaking up on Aaron, Lilley used a wire to garrotte her prey, attempting to strangle him from behind. The weapon snapped, and for a split second it must have seemed to everyone in that room that Aaron had a chance of survival. Lilley wouldn't allow such a chance. As she retrieved a knife from the kitchen Lenon held the victim down, and on her return Lilley stabbed Aaron twice in the neck. Not quite as artful a killer as her SOS character, she moved onto his chest, where she plunged the knife for a third time. As Aaron lay gasping for breath his blood soaked into the carpet beneath him.

With their victim dead, the next stage of their plan could begin. The pair dragged the body to the ready-prepared room on their homemade gurney fashioned from a supermarket trolley. For whatever reason the pair decided not to use the acid to destroy Aaron's body and instead dug a shallow grave in the back garden, where they hid the corpse.

Lilley texted Lenon about the events that had unfolded the previous day, expressing how exhilarated she was to have killed their victim. Meanwhile, Aaron's parents grew increasingly concerned when their son didn't return home. After several hours had ticked by they phoned the police and reported him missing.

A week later Lilley and Lenon laid a patio over the missing boy's remains. Ecstatic in the belief that she was getting away with murder, Lilley told a close friend on 19 June that she knew what had happened to the young man, boasting of how she had killed him. With no reason to run away from home, police looked into who Aaron may have had contact with recently. They checked his mobile phone record and saw that the last call he'd received had been from Lenon.



“ ECSTATIC IN THE BELIEF THAT SHE WAS GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER, LILLEY TOLD A CLOSE FRIEND ON 19 JUNE THAT SHE KNEW WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE YOUNG MAN, BOASTING OF HOW SHE HAD KILLED HIM ”

FRIEND OR FOE?

Four days after Aaron was last seen, police turned up at ‘Elm Street’ to talk to the mother of three. Both residents originally lied to police, telling them that they had not seen Aaron the day he went missing. But when CCTV footage from the mall showed that they were lying, they admitted that he’d visited their home, still trying to fool officers into looking elsewhere for the missing boy. When detectives searched the house, they discovered the tools they had purchased weeks beforehand. The security camera set up at the home where the murder took place captured footage of Lilley holding a weapon. It was turned off an hour and a half after they had arrived home. An excavation of the garden uncovered the decomposing remains of the missing boy. Police duly arrested them and questioned them about Aaron’s murder.

Both women denied the charges against them, each attempting to pin the murder on the other. Lenon admitted being an accessory to murder but Lilley tried to pin the blame solely on Lenon, insisting she had fallen asleep and last saw Aaron with Lenon. Their October 2017 trial at the Supreme Court of Western Australia lasted for five weeks, featuring evidence that damned those responsible for the violent death Aaron had suffered. On the stand for five hours during one session, Lilley tried to tell the courts she had taken a three-hour nap after the victim had returned home with her flatmate. However, Lenon’s story held more clout regarding the events that unfolded that June afternoon.

The jury took less than three hours to convict Lilley and Lenon for murder. Sentencing was scheduled for the following month. Awaiting the court’s decision regarding their punishment, Lilley resided in the somewhat cushy Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility at Bandyup Women’s Prison. Her former accomplice was severely burned on her back, shoulders, breasts, neck, arms and

fingers following a hot water attack as she stood in line for medication in a separate unit. Lenon had been a mother herself and her actions against another woman’s child had repulsed inmates at the facility where she was housed.

Aaron’s mother, father and stepmother condemned the pair on the courthouse steps following the verdict. Aaron’s mother called Lilley a “disgusting animal” for what she had done to her son. Judge Stephen Hall described the slaying as “morally repugnant” as he sentenced them both to life behind bars with a minimum term of 28 years – one of the highest minimum sentences to be handed down by the court.

In April 2019, Lilley launched a legal challenge to the state’s highest court, asking for her conviction to be reconsidered on the basis that the “verdict was unreasonable and was not supported by the evidence”. The court rejected her appeal on 22 October 2019.





CANNIBAL COUPLE

**THE STEAMED MEAT WAS IN THE FRIDGE NEXT TO THE DOG. A DAY BEFORE
SHE HAD MET DMITRY AND NATALIA, IT HAD BEEN ELENA VASHRUSHEVA**

WORDS DR. CHARLIE OUGHTON

For many of us, eating is an act of love. We feed our lovers to delight their hearts, feed our families that traditional Sunday roast to show we care and to support their growth, and we may sneakily grab a snack ourselves, to have that special bit of 'me' time with a bucket of ice cream or a pack of jerky. The tradition dates back millennia, being referenced in Biblical stories such as Jesus's feeding of the 5,000 and his supposed final meal with his disciples in the Last Supper. It gives rise to the idea that food has magical properties that can transform society.

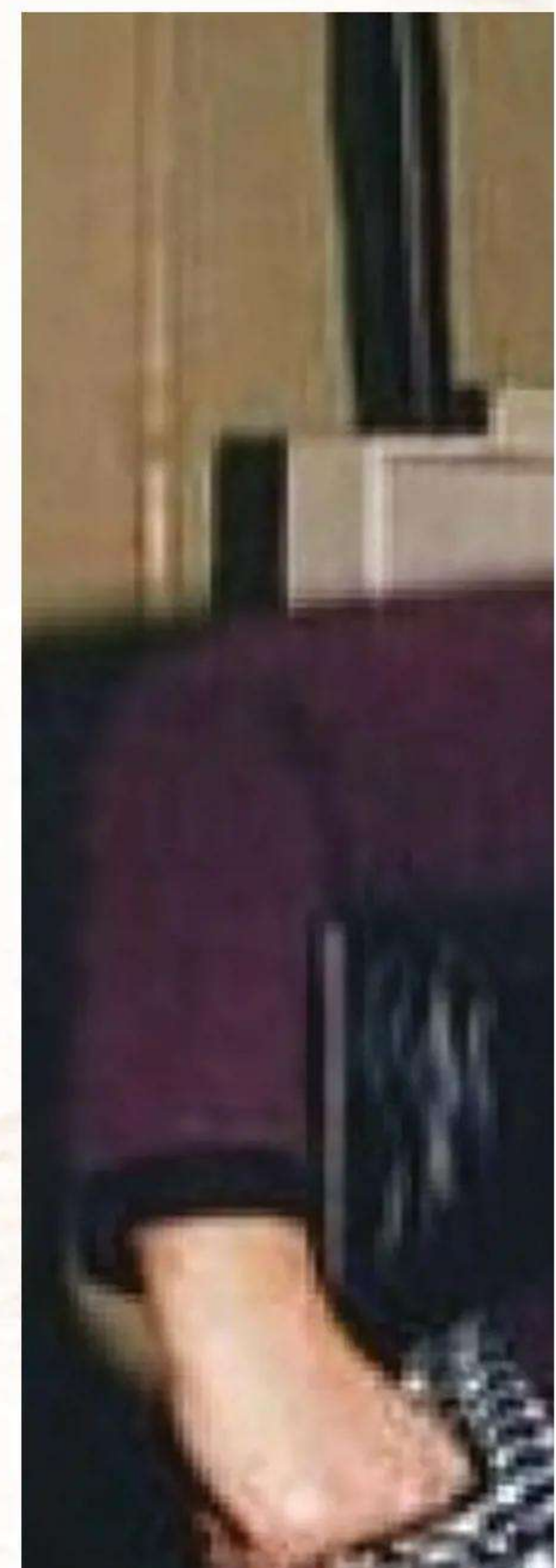
Food transformed a Russian husband and wife team – it turned Natalia Baksheeva from a nurse into an alleged killer chef and turned builder Dmitry Baksheev into an alleged necrophiliac. Reports suggest they may have killed and eaten 30 people over a period of 18 years, until their arrest in the city of Krasnodar, southwest Russia, in September 2017.

The mighty morsels made the pair of them believe themselves invisible, invincible and capable of escaping the law. What they did with their food was unusually cinematic. They created tableau with their keepings. Were they real-life versions of Hannibal Lecter, or more Sweeney Todd, selling body-part pies?

HOLLOW HANNIBALS

Dmitry Baksheev was no cinematic Hollywood type. Far from having the brooding, self-assured nature that we might associate with an antihero such as clever, stylish Hannibal Lecter or even Johnny Depp's Sweeney Todd as he shaved his clients into cutlets, Baksheev's mugshot shows an overgrown boy. His eyes are sunken and uncertain rather than angry about his arrest, and his frown lines are trenches of leather. This is despite his burly 35-year-old frame and rock'n'roll-type T-shirt.

Like with any good revenge story, however, his path veered rather eerily close to fiction because it was so extreme. Dmitry Baksheev had been an orphan trying to make his way in the world, and he was given a chance in life when he was adopted by a couple. No sooner was this succour given than it was taken away, as his adoptive mother, Svetlana, died of cancer. He took to stealing, and even set light to his own bedroom. After fielding calls from a trail of debt collectors



“DMITRY'S DATE FANTASIES MIXED SEX WITH DEATH ITSELF, AS HE HAD SEX WITH ONE OF THE CORPSES, WHICH WAS THEN MINCED”

and seeing the jobs he secured for his new son be repeatedly lost, the adoptive father (who doesn't want to give his name) showed Baksheev the door. “His eyes are made of glass”, the father said.

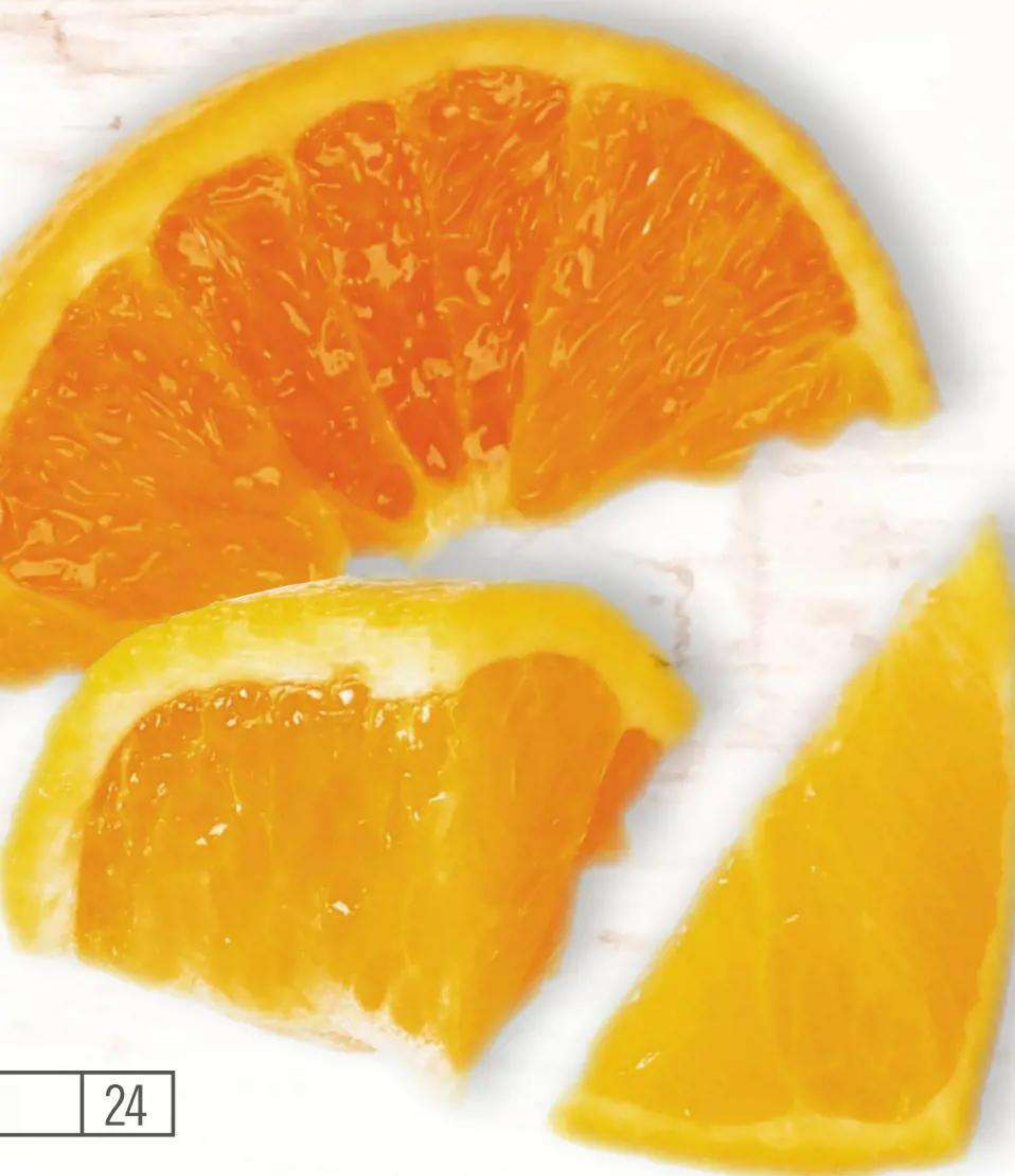
Natalia seemed different. A granddaughter to decorated military man Konstantin Chanikov, she was raised by her grandmother. Buxom by adulthood, her body seemed to speak of a life enjoyed. Photographs show her smiling, often in clothing so tight it made whatever she was wearing look mildly saucy. Even when wearing casual clothing she had a quality of the lascivious about her. She seemed the diametric opposite of her co-conspirator.

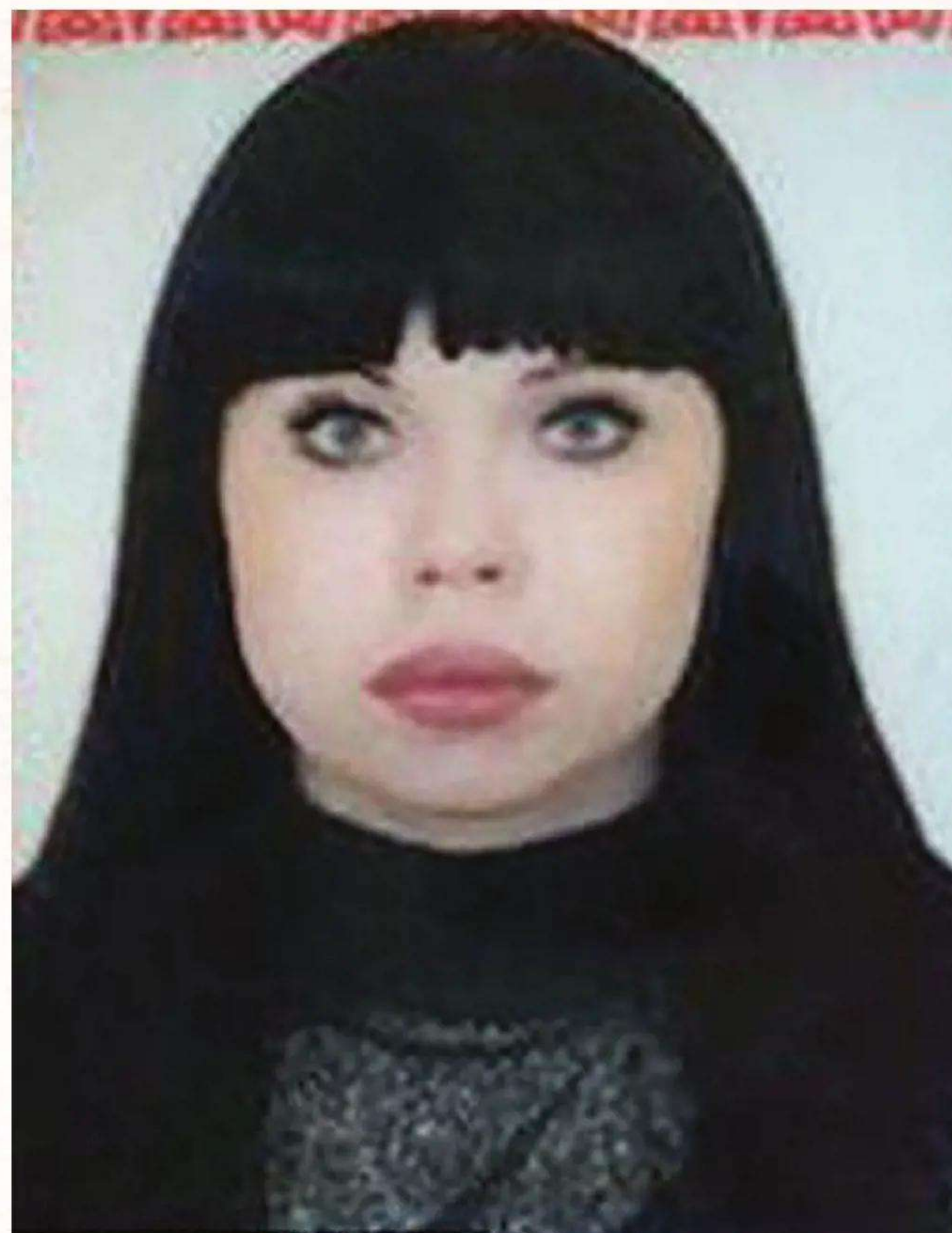
She had worked as a nurse in the military, and after meeting Dmitry, she coaxed and cared for the wayward teen and before long they were married. It is said she feels for her husband like a mother. He was polite, if quiet, and soon got a job working on a construction site. Nevertheless, they were deeply unhappy – she was known for attending work too paralytic from alcohol to stand. Locals observed that she began to look unkempt, and when neighbours went to complain about the strange odour coming from the couple's flat, she would create a scene and chase them away. She was known to have a taste for sweet treats bought from the local shops, and would buy alcohol to flirt with the local military trainees. Dmitry Baksheev, meanwhile, kept himself to

ABOVE-LEFT Dmitry looked increasingly bedraggled as time went on. Rather than this being taken for granted, it raised suspicions about his behaviour and led to his and Natalia's arrest for murder

ABOVE-RIGHT Photographs of Natalia even in her casual clothes show a fun-loving woman ready to strike a pose, seemingly the antithesis of the jobless alcoholic who ate people

FAR-RIGHT Sources initially stated that this was the alleged cannibal Natalia, though the consensus now is that the woman is final victim Elena Vashrusheva





himself and would buy the cheapest things possible when he went out. Carping newspaper headlines would later say, 'She drinks, he stinks'.

On 25 September 2017, a stern pronouncement appeared on the austere red website belonging to the Investigation Committee of the Russian Federation. It discussed the murder of a dismembered woman under part 1, article 105 of the Criminal Code.

This was not a stranger to the couple. Natalia and Dmitry had come upon Elena Vashrusheva together. On 8 September, Elena had been the same age as Dmitry and was a waitress living in the same military complex as them. She was from the town of Omutninsk in Kirov region. They'd taken her to drink vodka together in a disused block of unfinished military flats in the Repina Street area of the city. The liquor went to their heads, and before long an argument erupted. Natalia accused the younger woman of flirting with her husband. Not the most rational way of resolving conflict, Elena was shortly dispatched and chopped up. The deranged husband hid some of the fragments and scattered others while absent-mindedly playing about with his phone. The couple seemed to be trying to fill a hole in their relationship that they were not willing to admit was there in the first place.

STARTERS

Precisely when they started to kill their company is lost in the grisly details that pepper the case. What is understood is that when they searched for savoury suitors, perhaps to spice up their marriage, they started with Internet dating sites. Their 'partners' (both men and women appear to have

been victims) were enticed with alcohol spiked with the medication Corvalol. It's a sedative containing Phenobarbital and is mainly used to relax the body in the event of seizures. It works within half an hour of being drunk. The doomed would-be lovers were put to sleep in order to be prepared for a food-based threesome.

Some reports even state that Dmitry's date fantasies mixed sex with death itself, as he had sex with one of the corpses, which was then promptly minced into a mighty, meaty burger patty.

But their just desserts came. As is bogglingly and increasingly often the case, Dmitry seemed to forget that his phone was not his own private dimension for internal fantasy storage, but a piece of machinery to which pretty much anyone can gain access if they have the knowhow. Perhaps owing to being part of the Insta generation and obsessed with collecting likes from imaginary

BELOW What looks like a severed head has been dumped on the floor in this photo. The victim appears to have been scalped



PANTRY OF HORRORS

DMITRY AND NATALIA WERE WELL STOCKED WITH MEAT — INVESTIGATORS STRUGGLED TO TELL IF IT WAS ANIMAL OR HUMAN



Evidence at the heart of the case, the camera records the 'proud' moment a hand adds the finishing touches to the cannibals' festive feast - a human head



Inside the alleged cannibal couple's fridge there could be a chicken's carcass and some form of stew or dip. As an evidence photograph, however, one might assume otherwise

followers, he had puckishly posed with the hand of one of the victims, waving it at the camera and sticking one of the fingers up the nose of a victim as he clicked the shutter on his little tableau. Another photograph shows him stuffing a wrist in his mouth, the fingers in a 'rock on' gesture and a filth-tipped fingernail held aloft.

Roman Khomyakov, a road worker, was putting in a day on the asphalt in the area when he noticed a black Samsung phone laying on the path, just as a figure elsewhere was checking his empty pocket. The phone could have been trodden on, ignored or sold on, but the fingers that ran over it were intrigued. The figure with the empty pocket had started back. Roman checked the screen and unlocked it. The shape turned the corner of the road. The memory was selected and the photographs began to scroll - a head and a hand, doing what they shouldn't. Roman's view of them was replaced by the appearance of the flustered and by all accounts rather



An investigator's grimace says it all as officers handle a jar eventually found to contain human flesh. No gloves in the world would be thick enough

“HER EYES ARE SAID... TO CONTAIN OLIVES AND THERE ARE NOT-QUITE DELICATE RIPS OF ORANGE PEEL JAMMED INTO HER SOCKETS”

smelly young man, who loomed into view. The newcomer's shoulders pumped hard as his heart raced, and because of Dmitry's dishevelled appearance, Roman took him for a homeless person. He simply chose to keep the phone to himself for the time being when he was asked if he'd seen it. Closer up, Roman realised the peculiar stranger before him was the man nigh on nibbling flayed fingers in the picture. Roman denied any knowledge of the lost phone and passed the offending object on to the next available police vehicle, with the simple command, "It's your job, sort it out."

NETFLIX AND KILL

Investigators descended on the couple's home at the Military Aviation Academy on 12 September 2017. It was a different story to the 'killing crypt', as they called the flats where they had committed the murders. In the humble abode, the

authorities were greeted with a stew of human existence in saline. Offcuts and titbits were discarded with awful abandon, some in the fridge and freezer, others in cellars and the adjoining property at 135 Dzerzhinskogo Street. The victims' phones were soon found close by.

It is actually difficult to know just by looking what was shop-bought meat and what was not. Photographs released by the police show faces with flowing tresses that, if they were not actual severed heads, could easily be Halloween props. One apparent scalp is attached to cascading auburn hair that looks bloodless on the inside, perhaps having been drained. Elsewhere, what we can only hope is a random, mousy brunette wig is chucked against a white microwave. Investigators are also seen holding a jar of what appears to be squashed, pickled private parts – was Dmitry chucking slimy gherkins in order to stuff as much as possible into the pots? There even exists the photograph of a refrigerator that initially looks like it contains the leftovers of the last night's meal and perhaps an uncooked chicken. A number of news sources chose to censor this apparent bird, perhaps believing it most likely to be an offending item, as the image was issued by police.

There were also 19 sections of skin – and not the crispy type you try to cook on your chicken – that were discovered. It is not clear at this time what state they were in. But the most unpleasant display was also the most meticulously presented. Dumped on a sofa was a series of old-fashioned printed photographs. On the top of this pile, next to snaps of Natalia smiling happily for the camera, was a burst of colour against a black background. A grey-sleeved right arm leans rather gingerly into the picture. The arm tapers up to a watch, which itself is surrounded by a helter-skelter pile of oranges and what might be cauliflower on a formal metallic serving dish. The hand reaches up past the fruit and, with studied precision, appears to place its index finger on

the mouth of a severed human head. It's shiny and bloated. There's some sort of material – perhaps clingfilm – over the top half of a startled-looking woman's face. Her hair is placed tidily behind her head in a blue cap, but that is where any attempt at courtesy stops, because there's a large lemon pinned on her nose with a blue plastic spike. Her eyes are said by various reports to contain olives and there are not-quite delicate ribs of orange peel jammed into her sockets to loosely resemble eyelids. The image is so grotesque it looks almost comic, until you realise what you're looking at or consider what that mouth might have felt like.

That photograph was dated 28 December 1999. Assuming that date wasn't added after the fact, this suggests two things. Firstly, that the woman was a horrifying festive feast for the couple, being eaten on the run-up to the ostentatious New Year celebrations on 1 January (Russian orthodox Christians traditionally celebrate Christmas in a quieter, more private manner on 7 January).

Secondly, we have to consider how we now use photographs. We take photographs on our phone for ease of access to keep them with us. We also lose our phones a lot, as Dmitry found out. The things that are truly special to us may be kept at home. That fruity head shot had been printed out and kept within easy reach by the couple for nearly two decades. It was a memento that they had used to remember their good times and plan more. This photograph of a dead woman's head that they were about to eat was their idea of Netflix and kill. It was romance, nurture and murder in one fetid stew.

Videos containing information on cannibalism were also found in the squalid flat. That said, filing wasn't their strong suit. Tupperware contained the frozen pieces of their final victim, Elena, from their street-drinking session. They had eaten her heart. She was perched next to plastic bags of dead dog and cat meat – the remains of their own pets.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

NATALIA AND DMITRY'S RELATIONSHIP DRIFTED BETWEEN MARRIED COUPLE AND MOTHER AND SON, BASED ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH FOOD

Why might the couple have used fruit in the tableau incorporating a victim's severed head?

Since The Bible, fruit in the West has represented transgression, with side orders of sexuality, fertility and nourishment. Putting fruit with a severed head contrasts the brutality of murder with sexualised symbolism of growth and nurture – perhaps like Renaissance memento mori. 'Memento mori'

translates as 'remember you will die', and like the couple's grotesque tableau, these artworks placed death in the midst of life. Renaissance masters like Hals and Holbein incorporated skulls into their portraits, either openly held by their sitters or (as in *The Ambassadors*) unexpectedly confronting the viewer when the painting is seen from an angle. Even if it wasn't intentional, there's some intense cultural symbolism going on here.

the body to ensure human survival. Violent murder does the exact opposite, breaching the body's boundaries (skin or mouth) to kill someone. This placement implies a sexual element to the murders, but also potentially enabled the couple to examine or recreate their own actions through their victims' bodies.

BIO DR. SASHA GARWOOD



RESEARCH ASSOCIATE AT THE HUMANITIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

Dr. Sasha Garwood studied at Oxford and University College London, working on sex and food as a nexus of cultural anxieties. Her first book, *The Skull Beneath the Skin: Early Modern Women And Self-Starvation* is due out from Routledge in 2019. She teaches English and history.

Evidence found included images of victims posed with body parts placed in their facial orifices. What might the significance of this have been?

There's an ancient and powerful cultural connection between food and sex that centres on the mouth and the crossing of bodily boundaries. Mouths and genitals have lots of nerve endings, so both eating and sex are sensually pleasurable – and both food and body parts need to penetrate

While the alleged murderers are married, they are said to have behaved like a mother and son. What role could food have played in this?

Family relationships, particularly maternal ones, are created and maintained through food – think of breastfeeding. Anthropologist Carole M. Counihan tells us that food reflects emotional bonds – so in a situation as claustrophobic and transgressive as cannibalism, feeding is a basic and very powerful way of shifting a romantic relationship into a quasi-maternal one.

FAMINE AND FEAR

As crimes such as this are extremely rare, perhaps the most unappetising thing about all of this is that most of the meat removed from the property is visually indistinguishable from what many of us would pay good money to buy from our local shops. This may have been what Dmitry and Natalia were banking on. Looks can be deceiving, and they became the epitome of the Demon Barber of Fleet Street himself, allegedly selling pies made from their victims to the unknowing local military personnel. Asked what the mysterious meat was, Natalia was known to reply “whatever is around”. She’d even offered her services locally as a chef, perhaps simply to pursue her private passion, though a bit of money on the side never goes amiss, especially as she was out of work. She’d been knocked back by shop owners who would only take meat and services from reputable suppliers. Dmitry had, after all, been seen carrying a dripping backpack around with him. He had even taken it into a local shop as he topped up his phone.

As a result of Russia’s history and its ill-fated experiments with communism, people were hungry and often also reacting to trauma. Andrei Chikatilo, for example, connected his own cannibalism of young children to stories of his relatives being kidnapped and eaten when food was short. For people in desperate circumstances, the offer of food could be comradeship. It was not the kind of comradeship that the couple allegedly offered to Roman Sidorov, a 27-year-old friend of theirs who had been involved in a robbery with Dmitry. Also known as ‘Angel’ and named in some reports as ‘Gennady’, he was implicated and arrested in connection with the crimes as a result of Natalia’s testimony. She claimed

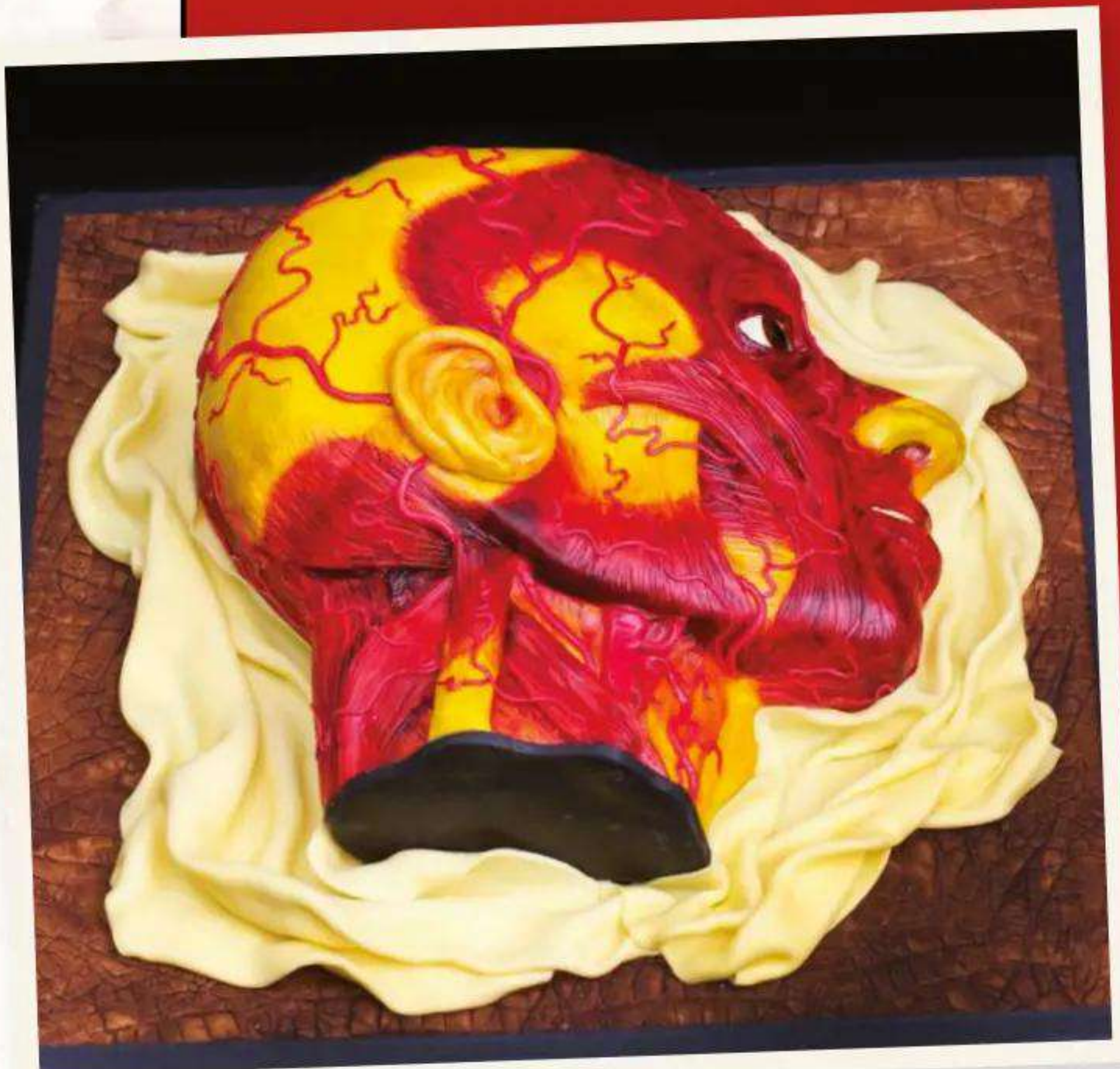


ABOVE Dmitry was noted by locals for his shabby appearance and pungent smell, but they were far from his worst characteristics

TASTE FOR THE MACABRE

DMITRY AND NATALIA MADE MACABRE ART OUT OF THEIR VICTIMS’ BODIES: CONJURER’S KITCHEN OWNER ANNABEL DE VETTEN’S EDIBLE DEATH PIECES SUGGEST WHY

The couple seem to have tried to make art out of their victims’ bodies by contrasting the shape and colour of the parts with their surroundings. The severed head was placed against colourful fruit. Hands were positioned almost parodically in poses that seemed theatrical or even jovial, with silly gestures. The gruesomeness of knowing what had happened emphasised the physical appearance of the detached limb, transforming it into an ornament with a different function. The morbid art encouraged them to think about the smell, taste and feeling of doing something taboo.



Dmitry and Natalia were actually not on their own in their interests in fusing their food with death imagery. Conjuror’s Kitchen is a distinctly legitimate outlet whose works have appeared on the likes of *Hannibal*, creating cakes shaped as memento mori. Their most popular designs are chocolate skulls and anatomical wax models, some of which come with keepsake dummy cakes for which their clients have special display cabinets. The worth of the dummy cakes, as with the crime photographs, is a reminder of the experience of eating something considered unusual, and the effect of that experience on the eater lasts long after the fact.

that he had sourced the women for them and then ‘readied them’ by raping the victims, before the butchering beloveds killed and ate them. He was considered a handsome chap with cheekbones to die for and was reportedly popular with the ladies, leading the police to initially side with the couple and accuse him of being involved with the murders. Sidorov is said to have launched a complaint against his treatment through his lawyer.

Remarkably, Sidorov may have gotten off comparatively lightly. Sergey Labinstev is a retired officer from the air force. With a shock of stoic grey hair and a commanding demeanour, he had known the couple for years when he claimed Dmitry accused him of having sexual relations with Natalia. The younger man took a stool to the officer’s back, Sergey believes with the intention of killing him, before Natalia decided to help and pounced on him. A life in the military is not for nothing, however, and the determined Sergey knew how to defend himself, before rather bizarrely sending them packing in a taxi, never to be heard from by him again. He remains convinced that not only was Dmitry feigning jealousy to have an excuse to attempt to jump him, but that he had been destined for a dish if he hadn’t successfully fought back and fought them off. The thought has given him nightmares of being made of ‘steamed meat’, he told *The Sun*.

STUFFED

Natalia is said to have confessed to 30 murders, identifying the people she had eaten from snapshots shown to her by the police. Incredibly, she also passed mandated psychiatric tests and was declared “an absolutely healthy adequate person who fully accounts of her actions”, according to local news sources. The allegedly mutilating murderer was said to be upset about being taunted by prisoners incarcerated with her – they catcall her to ask if she has eaten enough “human meat”. Dmitry was kept in solitary confinement for his own safety. Human rights activist Viktor Belikov met Dmitry in prison. For all the violence of the story, Belikov reported that



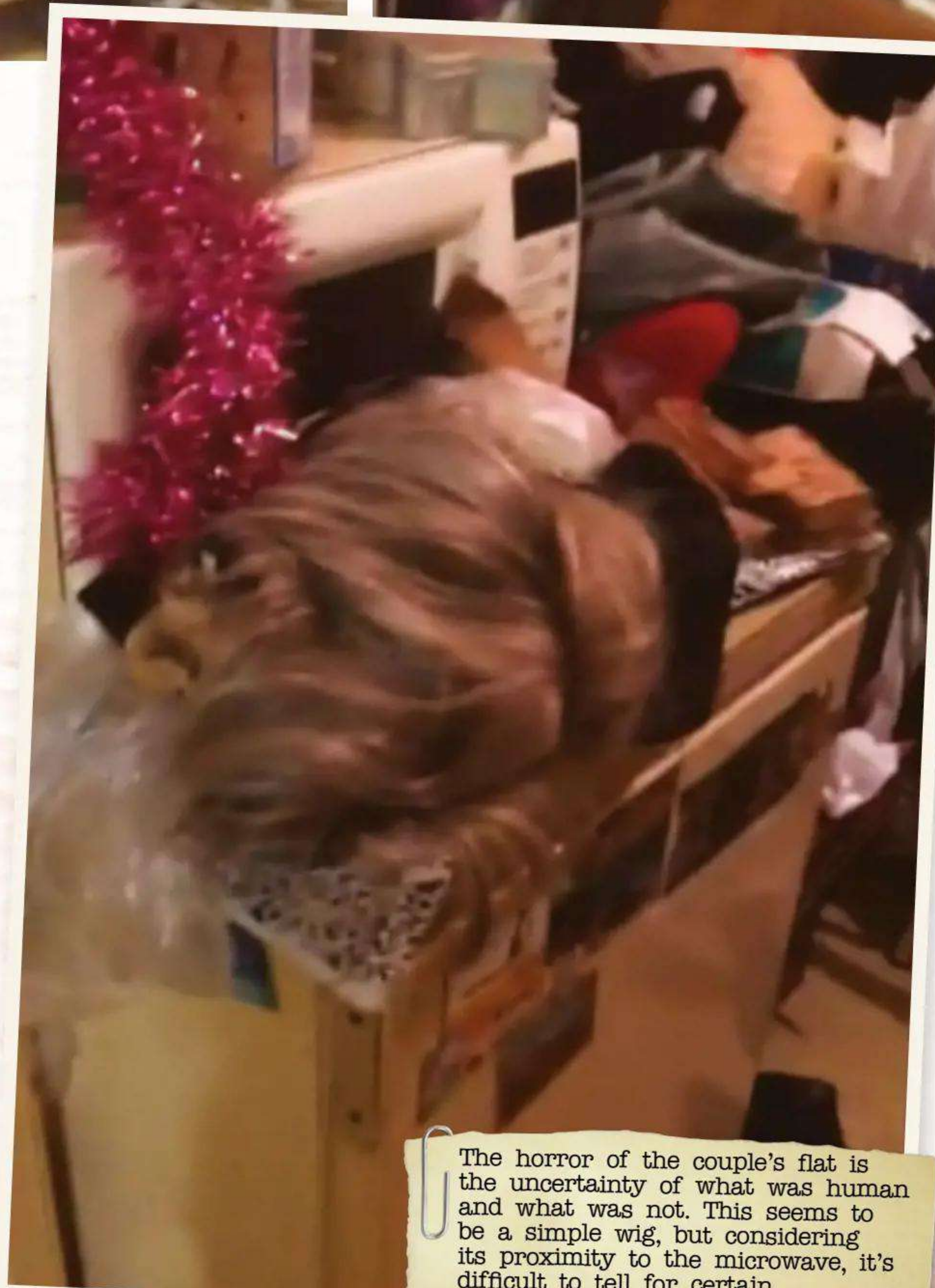
“ BODY PARTS BELONGING TO SEVEN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FOUND ON THE PROPERTY AND IDENTIFIED THROUGH DNA TESTING ”

Dmitry insisted that he loved his wife and that he would do anything for her.

Official sources are quoted as stating that body parts belonging to seven people were found on the property and identified through DNA testing. Some were alleged to have been made into winter clothing by the cannibals.

A matter of intrigue for the case was its lack of publicity, despite the horrific nature of the atrocities committed. There was a clear sense of shock in all of the witness statements – not over the crimes supposedly committed, but over the idea that two citizens working in the vicinity of the military had allowed themselves to slide into lives of dissolution. Some local gossip websites even argued that the story was of one couple committing one unexpected murder that had been blown out of all proportion. That perspective could have been an attempt to save face, particularly as the couple lived in what is evidently a proud and hardworking community. Some even disputed how long the couple had been together, saying Natalia was married before and that Dmitry had only been with her for ten years, which contradicted the idea that the head-platter photograph was one of their early kills. Their relationship with their community affected how the entire case was reported and investigated. Dmitry and Natalia were said to have retracted their confessions to having eaten people, after hearing about their private lives being splashed over myriad newspapers.

Police photographs and videos aren't fantasy. Whatever the precise horrors, it was clear that this was a couple for whom social support networks failed. Whatever the motives



The horror of the couple's flat is the uncertainty of what was human and what was not. This seems to be a simple wig, but considering its proximity to the microwave, it's difficult to tell for certain

ABOVE Dmitry and Natalia's flat was a chaotic mess, filled with horrific photos, victims' phones, and body parts – both animal and human

– for the sexual thrill of it or just as a result of hunger – it's astonishing that they could have gotten away with the crimes they've been accused of for so long. Despite the repulsive stench coming from their apartment, they had simply been ignored. Their twisted love story had become a bad 'b' movie. Natalia was sentenced to ten years in a penal colony in 2019, while Dmitry died of untreated diabetes in prison, in 2020.

DEATH ROW MOTHER

DARLIE ROUTIER SITS ON DEATH ROW AWAITING EXECUTION FOLLOWING THE BRUTAL MURDER OF TWO OF HER CHILDREN. MANY WONDER HOW MUCH LONGER SHE WILL BE THERE, BUT THE REAL QUESTION IS:
SHOULD SHE BE THERE AT ALL?

WORDS JOANNA ELPHICK

Living in a well-to-do suburb of Rowlett, Texas, with a successful husband and three beautiful little boys, Darlie Routier appeared to have the perfect life, but her idyllic world was a paper-thin facade hiding her depression, financial worries and daily disappointment. When the veneer finally cracked, the world's media became privy to a family in crisis that resulted in the shocking double homicide of two innocent children. Police investigated and quickly came to the conclusion that the unthinkable had occurred: the two boys had been murdered by their own mother. It was a staggering revelation that astounded the public. Surely a young mother wasn't capable of such a deplorable act?



"MY BABIES ARE DYING!"

The 911 call taken by Doris Trammell, the night dispatcher for the Rowlett Police Department, came in at 2.31am on 6 June 1996, galvanising Trammell into action. The distraught woman at the end of the phone said she had been assaulted by an intruder who had also attacked two of her three children, exclaiming "My little boy's dying... My babies are dying!" Forty-three seconds later, Trammell heard Darin Routier, Darlie's husband, in the background, shouting as he came downstairs.

Within a few minutes, the police and paramedics arrived at 5801 Eagle Drive to be met with a brutal and bloody crime scene.

Darlie initially said that she had woken up on the sofa to find an unknown white male, standing about six feet tall, walking away from her. She described her assailant in detail, saying that he wore a black shirt, dark blue jeans and a black baseball cap. During a later interview she changed her description of the man to a short-sleeved t-shirt and recalled that he had shoulder-length hair. The man had stabbed two of her children – Damon aged five and Devon aged six – whilst she had slept, and then attempted to slit her throat before dropping a knife in the utility room and escaping through the garage. Somehow, she had remained asleep throughout the entire ordeal only to wake up after the fatal blows had been administered. She had picked up the knife and chased the intruder into the garage. Only after the

Her husband Darin had been lying in bed upstairs with their seven-month-old infant, Drake. He slept through the grisly ordeal and only awoke when he heard his wife's frantic phone call to the 911 dispatcher.

On finding Devon lying on the floor, Darin knelt down to see what had happened. A glass coffee table had tipped over onto the child and, discovering the gaping holes in Devon's chest, Darin thought that the table had caused the wounds. The distraught father attempted CPR, but upon breathing into the boy's mouth, air and blood bubbled out of his chest.

Somehow everyone had remained unaware of the monstrous intruder who'd ripped through the family until little Damon nudged his bleeding mother awake to tell her they had been stabbed. Was such a thing even possible? The police didn't think so.

A SUSPICIOUS SITUATION

Rowlett police officers controlled the crime scene, preserving all potential evidence, until Scene of Crime Officers arrived a few hours later to begin their investigation. Physical evidence supervisors walked the scene in order to make their preliminary report. James Cron, a retired Lieutenant of the Dallas County Sheriff's Department, was also called in to assist since he had specialised in murder crime scenes in the past. Physical evidence supervisor Jeff Craig was also called upon to deal with the complicated blood trails and spatter patterns.

“DARLIE SAID A MAN HAD STABBED TWO OF HER CHILDREN – DAMON AGED FIVE AND DEVON AGED SIX – WHILST SHE HAD SLEPT, AND THEN ATTEMPTED TO SLIT HER THROAT”

attacker had left did she realise that her children had been violently stabbed and that she had also been cut by the knife.

Doris Trammell stayed on the phone with Darlie for approximately six minutes while the police officers confirmed that the attacker was no longer in the vicinity. They secured the scene and then ushered the paramedics into the lounge. Devon had been stabbed numerous times in his chest and died at the scene. Although Damon had been stabbed in the back, causing fatal injuries to both his liver and his lungs, the boy was still breathing as the medical team began administering first aid. Horrified by the gruesome sight, the first responder called for towels to stem the flow of blood pumping from little Damon's back, but it was later noted that Darlie ignored the request on two separate occasions, choosing to keep pressure on her own wound rather than help her son. The boy died during the ambulance ride to the hospital. At no point did Darlie ask how her children were doing or where they were being taken.

Darlie's injuries consisted of a deep cut and bruises to her neck, and various lacerations to her arm, hand and chin. She had also received a minor stab wound to her shoulder. Doctors at the hospital where she was treated declared that her injuries were superficial, although a later medical examination carried out by the defence counsel claimed that the wound to her neck had come within millimetres of her carotid artery. Either way, the paramedics attending the scene did not feel she was in any immediate danger, treating her lacerations with gauze and leaving her on the front porch whilst they desperately tried to save the children. Compared to the fatal injuries of her two sons, she had been extremely lucky and was released from hospital two days after the attack.

As the team began their thorough investigation it quickly became apparent that the evidence recovered from the house and garden suggested a very different turn of events from the story told by the boys' mother. As more and more inconsistencies appeared in her account, a shroud of suspicion began to surround Darlie.

At first, she said that she had woken up to see an intruder standing over her. As she stood up, her attacker ran across to the kitchen and into the utility room, where he dropped the bloody weapon before escaping out through the garage. Physical evidence supervisors walked the scene, but to them, immediately things didn't add up. Craig was the first to point out that there was no blood on the couch where

ABOVE Darlie leaves the Kerr County courthouse in 1997 during the trial for the murder of her five-year-old son, Damon, who died on 6 June 1996

**THE CAT CONUNDRUM****COULD THE FAMILY CAT HOLD THE SECRET TO THE ALLEGED INTRUDER?**

The Routier family owned a large Persian cat by the name of Bear whose vicious nature was well-known in the neighbourhood. Darin had never liked the creature, claiming that it was "weird" and aggressive during the trial. Apparently, the cat hissed and screeched when anybody came close to it. Originally, Bear was kept in a large cage out in the garage, but as the weather got warmer, Darlie insisted that he be brought into the

house where there was air conditioning. With this in mind she bought a smaller cage, which was placed at the foot of the couch where Darlie was sleeping on the night of the attack. The prosecution pointed out that if an intruder had entered the room, violently assaulted the children and then approached Darlie, Bear would have caused such a commotion that everyone would have been alerted to the intruder.



Darlie had been sleeping and, equally puzzling, there were hardly any blood stains where the knife had apparently been abandoned. Craig was adamant that, had she received a slash to the throat whilst lying back, the couch would be soaked in her blood. Meanwhile, Cron stated the knife itself would have been wet and couldn't possibly have been dropped on the utility room linoleum without bouncing and causing spatter marks on impact.

The intruder had smashed a wine glass as he exited the kitchen and shards were indeed discovered across the floor. Bloody footprints were discovered but these were beneath the glass, suggesting that they had been left before the breakage. On closer inspection, Craig established that the bare footprints most likely belonged to Darlie. This was confusing since she said she had run back and forth across the kitchen after the intruder had left, but her feet had not been cut by the shattered glass.

Having sprayed luminol on the work surfaces, the sink and surrounding area glowed an eerie green. Someone had bled profusely over the sink and had then attempted to clean it up with bleach. Blood droplets across the kitchen floor suggested slow movement rather than the frantic actions described by Darlie. More blood was discovered dripping down the door leading into the garage but nothing beyond this point. No cast-off blood patterns were found in the lounge where the boys had been murdered, but Craig later identified a bloody cast-off pattern on the back of Darlie's nightshirt. Further investigation of the nightwear revealed four slashes across the material but there were no corresponding wounds on Darlie herself.

Sergeant Nabors investigated the entry and exit point. A window screen covering an open window in the garage had

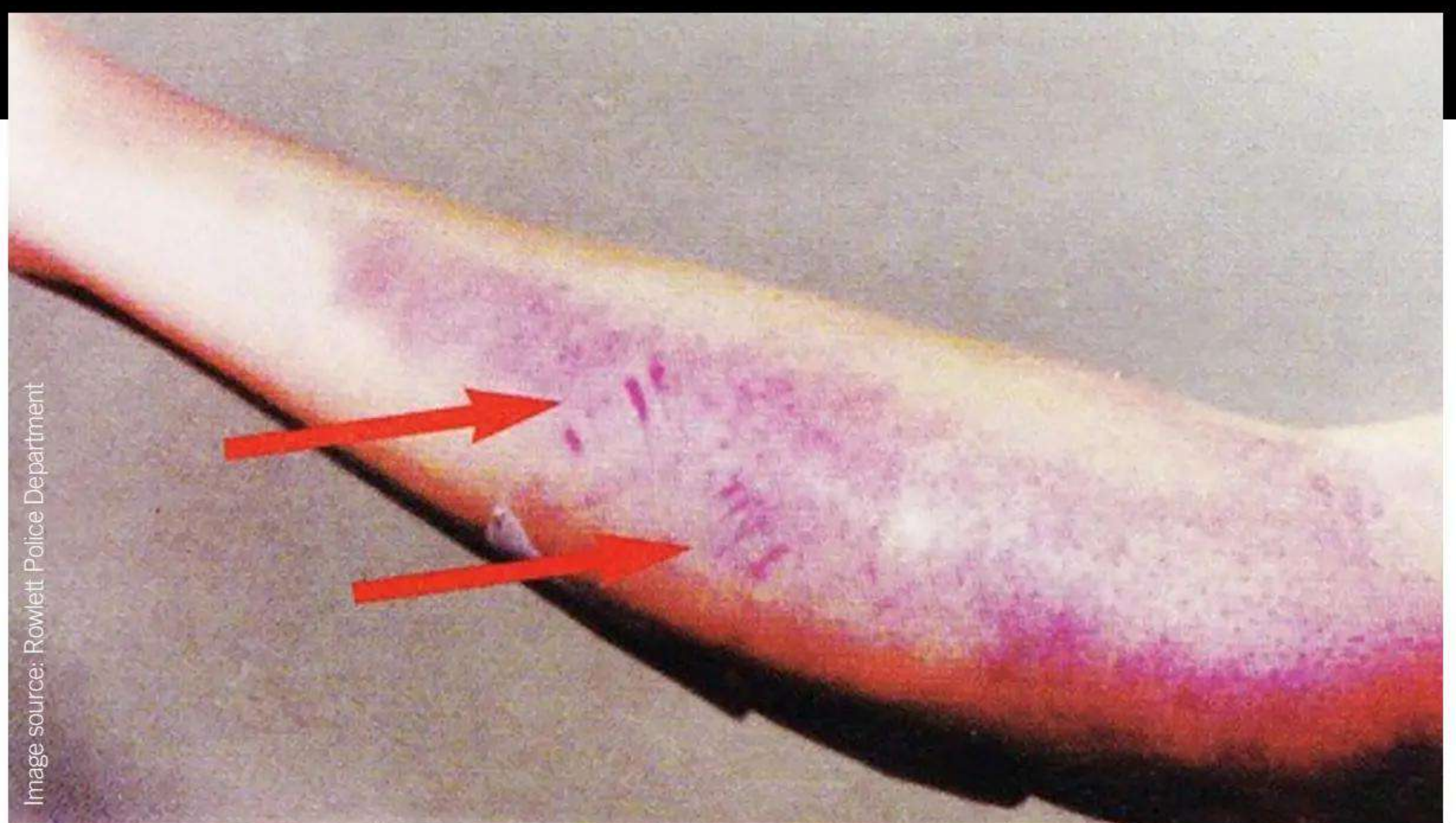


Image source: Rowlett Police Department

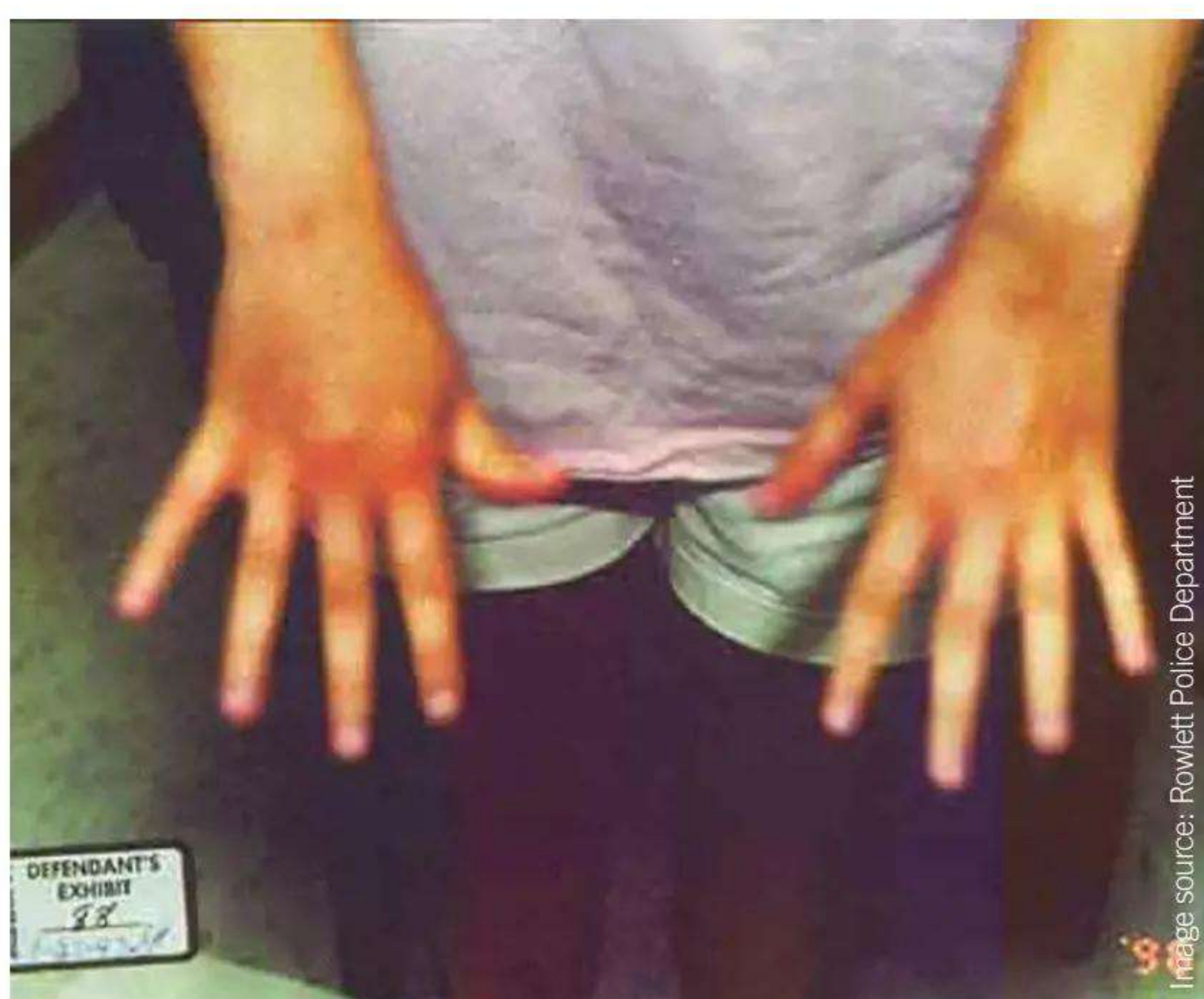


Image source: Rowlett Police Department

ABOVE Darlie claimed to have received these bruises during her fight with the intruder, but medical experts believed she made them herself by hitting her arm on the railings of her hospital bed.

LEFT Darlie allows paramedics to photograph and catalogue her various injuries, including multiple bruises on her hands.

THE CRIME SCENE

DARLIE'S VERSION OF EVENTS DIDN'T MATCH THE FORENSIC EVIDENCE FOUND AT THE SCENE, CASTING DOUBT ON HER INNOCENCE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING

CLEAN COUCH

Darlie said that she had been sleeping on the couch when the intruder slit her throat. Prosecution wanted to know, if this was the case, why there wasn't any blood where her head had been.

JEWELLERY BOX

Defence said that this was most likely a burglary that had gone wrong. Prosecution disputed the idea since there was an open jewellery box in plain sight, full of expensive items, which had not been touched.

KNIFE PRINT

A bloody knife print was located by Devon's body, mingled with Darlie's own blood. Prosecution said this occurred as she killed him. Defence argued it happened as she tried to save him.

WAKING MUMMY

At one point during the investigation, Darlie stated that Damon had walked over to her on the couch and woken her up. The prosecution argued that, with such serious injuries, this event was impossible.

BLOODY RAG

Defence stated that Darlie had attempted to stem the flow of blood by mopping Damon's wounds with a rag. Prosecution countered that first responders found no such cloth on or near the body.

Darlie described a frantic scene as she rushed between the sitting area and the kitchen. However, the large blood spots on the carpet suggest someone moving slowly.

THE STRUGGLE

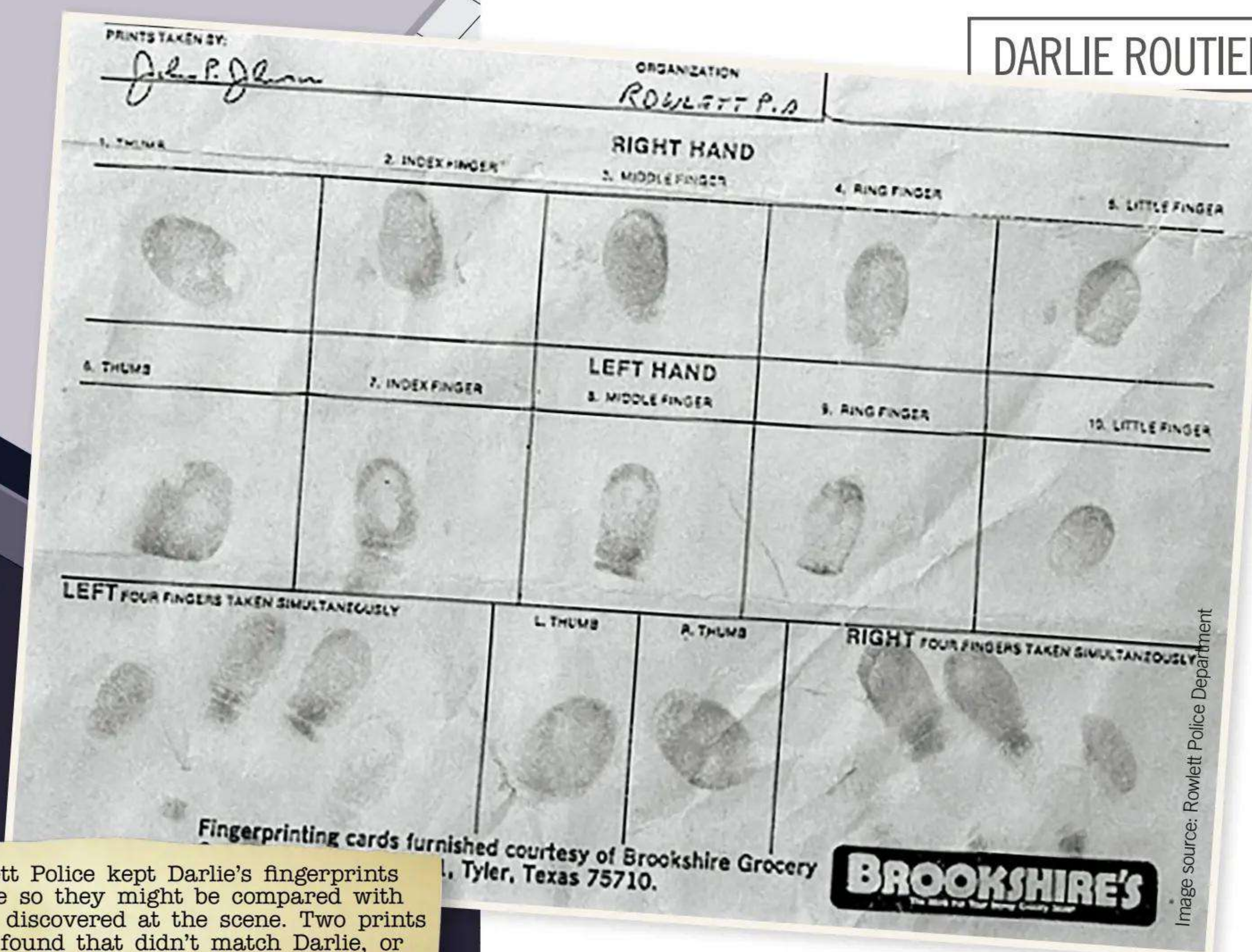
The vacuum cleaner had been knocked over. Defence said that this was a sign of the struggle between Darlie and the intruder. Prosecution argued that bloody prints beneath the cleaner showed that the scene had been staged after the murders.

Image source: Rowlett Police Department

BLOOD STAINS

Luminol showed large blood stains had been cleaned up with bleach. Prosecution claimed that this was where Darlie had caused her self-inflicted wounds and then attempted to wash the proof away. Defence argued that Darlie's wounds had been made by the intruder.

Rowlett Police kept Darlie's fingerprints on file so they might be compared with those discovered at the scene. Two prints were found that didn't match Darlie, or anyone else in the house.



MURDER WEAPON

Darlie said a bloody knife had been dropped by the intruder on the utility room floor. Forensic experts explained that there was no evidence that such a knife had touched that area since there were no corresponding blood stains.

been carefully cut, suggesting this was where the murderer had both entered and escaped. However, the dust along the window sill had not been disturbed. The outside flower beds beneath the window were equally untouched. No blood could be found in the garage or on the outside gate.

Nabors turned his attention to the murder weapon: a large kitchen knife. This was clearly part of a set owned by the Routiers, so the killer had picked up the knife after entering the building. But what had he used to cut through the screen? A close examination of the remaining knives in the kitchen revealed a bread knife with traces of the window screen snagged on the blade.

As an expert in murder crime scenes, James Cron was not convinced that Darlie Routier was telling the truth. The minor disturbance to the furniture conflicted with the horrors that had occurred and he agreed with Craig that the blood patterns told an entirely different sequence of events. Someone had overturned a vacuum cleaner but there were both blood smears and glass fragments beneath it, suggesting the violent attacks had already taken place before it was moved. This, Cron concluded, was a staged scene and not a genuine break-in. The other officers were inclined to agree.

THE POSTHUMOUS BIRTHDAY BASH

Eight days after the double murder of her sons, Darlie held a graveside birthday party for Devon, who would have turned seven that day. She invited a film crew to witness the heartbreaking ceremony, followed by a celebration at the cemetery. Video footage of Darlie spraying Silly String over the graves whilst laughing and joking appalled some viewers, who couldn't believe their eyes. Her calm demeanour at the hospital followed by what some people considered inappropriate behaviour by the graveside reinforced their general opinion of Darlie Routier. Four days later, she was arrested and charged with murder. The charge was raised to one of capital murder, since the victims were under the age of ten and, as the trial would take place in Kerrville, Texas, she was eligible for the death penalty if found guilty.

It was decided that Darlie would be tried for Damon's murder only, with the prosecution holding Devon's murder in reserve in the event she was acquitted. The trial began on 6 January 1997 with the prosecution's opening statements.

Darlie, they claimed, was a spoilt young woman who'd grown accustomed to a very comfortable lifestyle. Unfortunately, financial difficulties meant that such a way of life was unlikely to continue. With less than \$2,000 in their account and a recent loan rejection for \$5,000 from the bank, the Routiers were beginning to feel the pinch and it caused friction between the husband and wife. A month before the murders, Darlie had become so depressed that she'd written a suicide note. Although she never attempted to act out her plan, the prosecution argued that she was clearly not thinking rationally at that time. They said that this, and the fact that she was no longer the centre of attention, was ample motive for murder.

Her changing statements were highly suspicious and some of what she had said seemed highly improbable. Darlie later stated that Damon, having been brutally stabbed in the lungs and liver, had woken her up and had been talking to her, a feat that he simply could not have achieved.

Prosecution walked the jury through the crime scene, pointing out the discrepancy between the accused's version of events and the story told by the forensic evidence. The blood discovered in the family room was inconsistent with the fierce struggle the accused said she had had with the intruder, and although she spoke of her frantic movements, rushing from room to room, there were no increased-velocity blood patterns visible anywhere.

And then there was the sock. Both prosecution and defence were keen to discuss the discovery of a bloody sock located in an alley approximately 75 yards from the house. The prosecution argued that it had been planted by Darlie to suggest the direction in which the killer had made his escape. The defence, on the other hand, suggested that, in his rush to flee the scene, the unknown intruder had dropped the sock, having used it as a rag to wipe the blood from his knife.

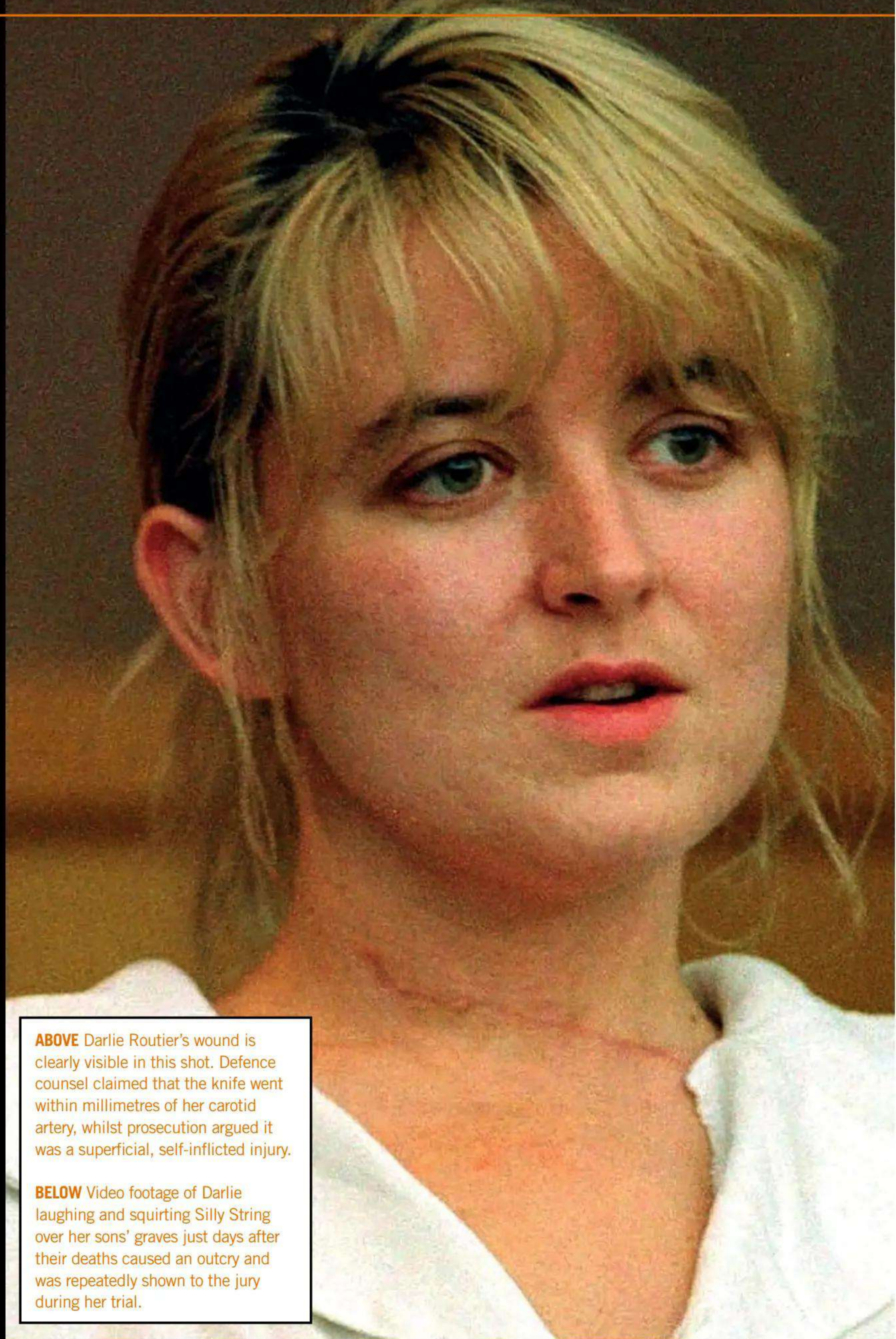
The defence argued that Darlie had absolutely no motive, since killing the children would never have yielded much in the way of life insurance. If this had been Darlie's plan, then surely it would have made more sense to dispose of her husband? After all, his life insurance was worth \$800,000 rather than the paltry \$10,000 for the untimely death of her two eldest sons.

The timing of the crime was also a major issue. The defence counsel said that it was physically impossible for Darlie to have brutally attacked her two children, slit her own

AND WHAT ABOUT DARIN?

DARIN ROUTIER SUPPOSEDLY SLEPT THROUGH THE ENTIRE MURDEROUS ATTACK ON HIS FAMILY

In 2011, Darin filed for divorce from Darlie but was quick to point out that he still believed in his wife's innocence. Throughout the investigation he supported her ever-changing version of events, going so far as to alter his own story in order to back hers up. However, Darlie's original attorneys had seriously considered introducing the notion that Darin, not Darlie, had caused the deaths of the children based on rumours that he had looked into faking a burglary for an insurance scam, and it was she who was covering for him when the plan went horribly wrong.



ABOVE Darlie Routier's wound is clearly visible in this shot. Defence counsel claimed that the knife went within millimetres of her carotid artery, whilst prosecution argued it was a superficial, self-inflicted injury.

BELOW Video footage of Darlie laughing and squirting Silly String over her sons' graves just days after their deaths caused an outcry and was repeatedly shown to the jury during her trial.



Image source: KXAS-TV



LEFT Darin Routier (centre) leaves the courthouse wearing a 'Forever in Our Hearts' t-shirt, depicting an image of Devon and Damon.

BELOW British television presenter and journalist Susanna Reid interviewed Darlie for a series about women on death row, which aired on 10 December 2020. Darlie remained adamant that she was innocent throughout the meeting.



throat in the kitchen, mopped it all up then to run through the garage, out the window and down the alley to plant the sock before re-entering the home to dial 911. They argued that Damon had still been alive when the paramedics arrived and they had estimated that the child could only have lived for eight or nine minutes post-injury. It certainly seemed an unlikely accomplishment. However, the prosecution were quick to point out that the defence had assumed the order of events. Darlie, they countered, could easily have planted the sock before inflicting her own wound.

Darlie's defence also pointed to the extensive wounds, both across her neck and up her arms. Why, they asked, would she have put herself in such great danger by slicing millimetres from her carotid artery? Prosecution stated that the wounds were superficial and this was apparent through the actions of the paramedics, who left her sitting on the doorstep for some time before taking her to hospital. The bruises up her arm only appeared after she had been in hospital and looked far more like marks made by continually slamming the arm against her bed rail than bruises inflicted during an attack.

So it went, back and forth until both parties had presented their case. Twenty-six days later, on 1 February, the jury

returned a verdict of guilty. Darlie Routier was subsequently sent to death row to await execution by lethal injection.

BUT WHAT IF...?

Darlie Routier has vehemently denied any involvement in her sons' murders and has maintained her innocence whilst awaiting her death sentence. Her defence lawyers have tirelessly fought the conviction, submitting a number of appeals, pleas and petitions. The first appeal began in 2001. Lawyers made a number of claims, including accusations of evidence and jury tampering, contamination of the crime scene, misconduct of the prosecution and even evidence suppression. However, all of these claims were turned down in 2003, closely followed by the dismissal of a habeas corpus petition.

However, Darlie continued to fight and, as she did, her vocal supporters started to swell in numbers. Various media outlets backing her protestations of innocence, such as fordarlieroutier.org, began appearing across the internet. Meanwhile, armchair sleuths espoused their theories, fuelling the idea that the wrong person was currently languishing on death row. A request for further DNA testing was lodged in 2008 on behalf of both prosecution and defence, in order to end the legal wrangling once and for all. Unfortunately, quite the opposite occurred.

“DARLIE STATED THAT DAMON, HAVING BEEN STABBED IN THE LUNGS, HAD BEEN TALKING TO HER – A FEAT HE SIMPLY COULD NOT HAVE ACHIEVED”

A number of items were eventually handed over to the UNT Health Science Center, Texas in 2014 for further testing, including samples from Darlie's nightshirt, bloody fingerprints taken from the murder weapon and samples taken from the abandoned sock. The results were given to State District Judge Gracie Lewis a year later. Most testing proved to be inconclusive, with the exception of those samples taken from the nightshirt, which showed no male DNA other than that of the two boys. All other DNA belonged to a woman, almost certainly Darlie herself.

It seems that no matter what she does or says, all evidence leads back to Darlie with no clear evidence of an intruder. But for many, doubt still hangs over the conviction. No one has been able to explain two bloody fingerprints found at the scene that cannot be matched to anybody known to be present at the house during that fateful night. Could these prints finally establish that Darlie's 'attacker' was genuine? Fibres taken from the knife that was thought to have cut the window screen were actually similar to those on the forensic dusting brush used to check for prints. Finally, no one has successfully explained how Darlie could have murdered her children, cut her own throat, dumped the bloody sock and staged the crime scene in such a short space of time, even if she had inflicted her own wounds just before calling 911.

Results from a new set of technologically advanced DNA tests requested by the defence counsel have yet to be released. Meanwhile, Darlie Routier, whether guilty or innocent, sits on death row, her own life hanging in the balance.



DOLL-FACED ASSASSINS

MANY BEFORE THEM HAD TRIED AND FAILED TO TAKE OUT KIM JONG-NAM, THE EXILED SON OF NORTH KOREA'S SUPREME LEADER. BUT HIS KILLERS CLAIM THEY WERE DUPED INTO ENDING HIS LIFE

WORDS DAVID HUTT



● スクープ映像…金正男氏“暗殺”の瞬間

カメラが捉えた

LEFT A still from airport CCTV footage shows Kim Jong-nam as he waits for his flight back to Macau, just moments before his assassination



As a young boy, Kim Jong-nam (front right) was reported to be very similar to his father, Kim Jong-il (front left), with the same love for the arts



ABOVE Special personnel wearing protective clothes investigate the Kuala Lumpur International Airport for chemical contamination

On a sunny February morning, a North Korean exile was waiting at the self-check-in counters at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, in Malaysia, when two young women approached. One, a Vietnamese national, was dressed in a distinctive T-shirt embroidered with 'LOL'. Suddenly, she raced towards the North Korean man and rubbed the cloth that was in her hand across his face. It happened in a matter of seconds. Half an hour later, the man was dead.

Kim Jong-nam was the half-brother of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un. A black sheep to say the least, he was known for his penchant for Disneyland, fine dining and world travel. He had been living in Macau for more than a decade when he made his fateful visit to Malaysia in early 2017, a favourite destination for the exile.

LIFE OF KIM

So the fairy-tale story goes, Kim Jong-il was born in 1942 on top of Mount Paektu, a spiritual home of the Korean people. As the future dictator emerged into the world, winter suddenly changed to spring, one solitary star enlightened the nighttime sky and a double rainbow appeared. This is what the North Korean people are taught about their eternal leader, who ruled the hermetic nation from 1994 until his death in 2011.

In reality, Kim Jong-il was born in the small village of Vyatskoye, in the Soviet Union, in 1941. There were no celestial wonders to herald his coming. Only the sorrowful pangs of his father, Kim Jong-sung, who would continue living in exile until Japan's colonisation of Korea ended the following year. Kim Jong-sung would go on to become the

first tyrant of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, ruling from 1948 until 1994.

Births of North Korea's dynastic, dictatorial clan are seldom straightforward. Kim Jong-il's first son, Kim Jong-nam, was born in May 1971. He was, however, the result of a notorious affair. Kim Jong-nam's mother, Song Hye-rim, was a famed actress and favoured mistress of Kim Jong-il. To avoid embarrassment and censure, Kim Jong-nam's birth was hushed up. As a baby he was sent to live in secret with his mother's older sister, before being sent to study at international schools in Switzerland. He only returned to Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, in 1988, aged 17.

When his father took over as supreme leader in 1994, Kim Jong-nam was touted to be the heir to the dynastic rule. Sensitive, artistic and introverted, he didn't appear to have the necessary political ruthlessness, however, that goes into making a North Korean dictator.

In 2001, this was made abundantly clear. That year, he was caught trying to enter Japan on a fake Dominican Republic passport. His goal: to visit Disneyland. The embarrassment following this incident forced Kim Jong-il to alter his plans for accession. It was decided that his heir would instead be Kim Jong-un, his youngest son, who assumed responsibility of the totalitarian state in 2011.

ON THE RUN

Kim Jong-nam was no stranger to the possibility of assassination. In fact, it is somewhat surprising that he was able to stay alive for so long. Since 2003 he had been living in exile in Macau under the protection of the Chinese

PRACTICAL CHEMISTRY

WE ASKED AN EXPERT WHY THE VX DIDN'T KILL ANYONE ELSE

HOW IS VX TYPICALLY ADMINISTERED TO A PERSON?

VX is a liquid with the consistency of motor oil. It is not very volatile. It evaporates at a rate near that of motor oil, so it is most likely to be delivered by direct contact, as seems to have been the case in the killing of Kim Jong-nam, or as an aerosol – liquid droplets suspended in air. It is absorbed by the skin and is known to be lethal from skin contact.

IN THE ATTACK ON KIM JONG-NAM, THE SUSPECTS WERE NOT AFFECTED BY THE NERVE AGENT. WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS?

My understanding is that the VX was on some sort of cloth that was then wiped on Kim Jong-nam's face. Because VX is not very volatile, it seems possible to me that it could be carefully added to the cloth and quickly wiped on his face without significant effects on the two women involved.

It has also been suggested that two chemicals that form VX could have been mixed when they were wiped on his face. This would be safer for the women adding the chemicals. The chemicals could be O'-ethyl methylphosphonite (QL) and sulphur. I haven't heard of any evidence of this, so it's pure speculation.

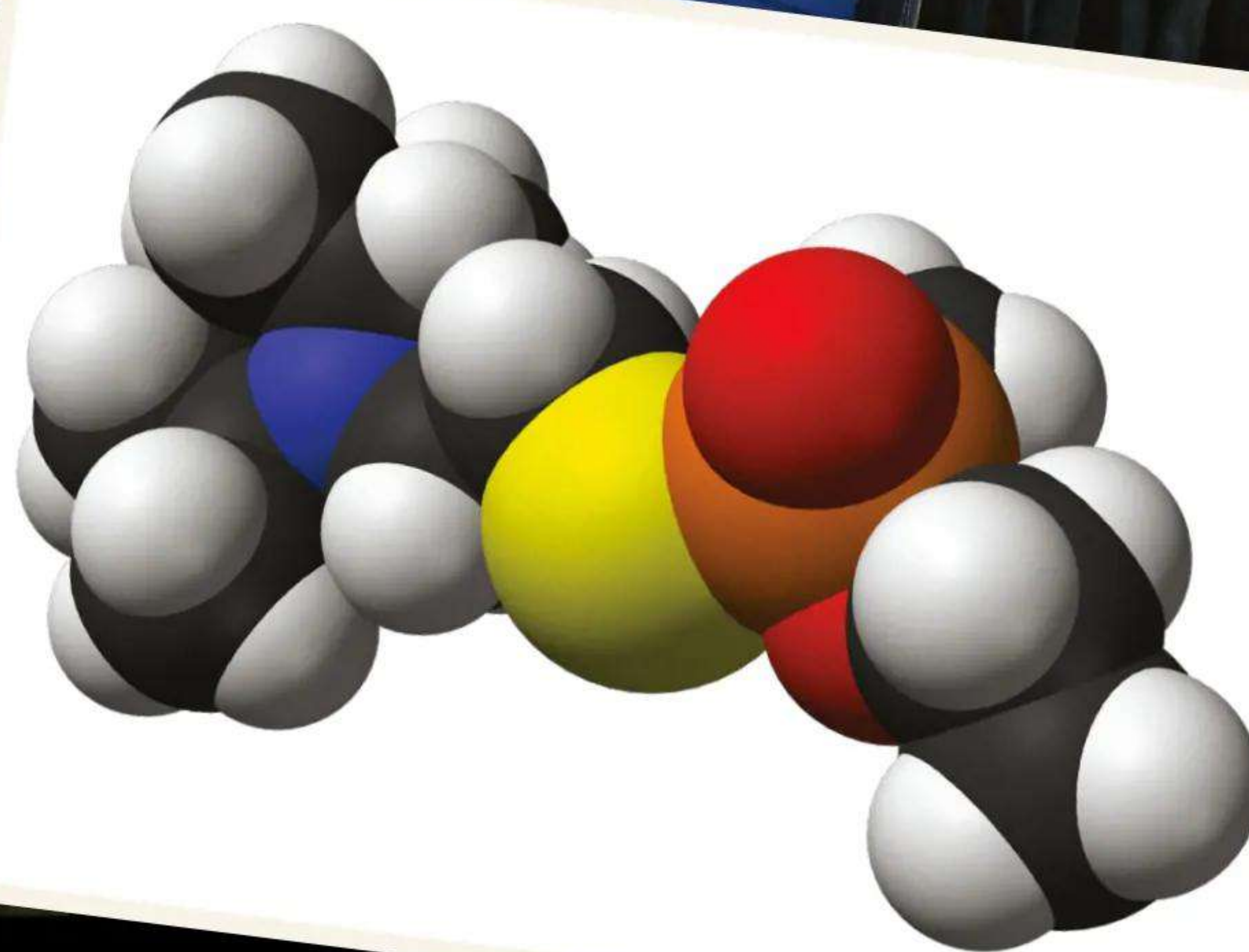
IF VX WAS USED, WHY DID IT NOT CONTAMINATE THE KUALA LUMPUR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT?

It only takes a small amount of VX to be lethal, and a small amount of a substance that is not very volatile is not likely to significantly spread beyond the area of direct application. Picture the level of contamination to a room if a few drops of motor oil were put on a rag and wiped on something that was then removed from the room.

BIO DR MARK BISHOP

Dr Bishop is an adjunct instructor at the Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies Department at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California.

Kim Jong-nam, 45, was murdered in Kuala Lumpur International Airport in February after spending years in exile from his North Korean home



ABOVE The VX nerve agent molecule was first synthesised by researchers at the British weapons research facility Porton Down after experimenting with new chemical combinations to make more effective pesticides

government. Still, while his father was alive he enjoyed an affluent, globetrotting lifestyle, funded by regular cash allowances from Pyongyang.

The death of Kim Jong-il in 2011 and the assumption of power by Kim Jong-un changed everything. Kim Jong-nam's allowance was cut off and there were no indications of brotherly love. Indeed, it is thought that since his half-brother became supreme leader, there has been a permanent order for his assassination. Such was the severity that Kim Jong-nam is believed to have drafted a letter to his half-brother, reading: "Please withdraw the order to punish me and my family. We have nowhere to hide. The only way to escape is to choose suicide."

It is alleged that a failed assassination plot on Kim Jong-nam was carried out in 2006 as he travelled through Budapest's International Airport on the way to Germany – a plan that, although it was to fail this time, would be successfully executed more than a decade later. It remains unknown whether this was a direct order of his father, or the secret demands of his half-brother. South Korean investigators claim that, four years later, Pyongyang ordered a China-based agent to assassinate Kim Jong-nam by faking a traffic accident in Singapore. The spy was to bribe a taxi driver to run him down. The plan failed when Kim Jong-nam failed to turn up in the city-state.

“AS HE WAITED TO USE A SELF CHECK-IN MACHINE AT THE AIRPORT, THE ATTACKERS STRUCK. IT TOOK LESS THAN FIVE SECONDS”

If subtlety was the aim of the 2010 hit then the successful assassination in February was motivated by getting the job done. Kuala Lumpur was known to be a favourite destination of Kim Jong-nam. He often visited his nephew, Jang Yong-chol, who served as the North Korean ambassador in Malaysia until 2013. As he waited to use a self check-in machine at the airport, preparing to board a plane back to Macau, the attackers struck. It took less than five seconds. On 24 February 2017, Malaysia's police chief, Khalid Abu Bakar, revealed that the post-mortem toxicology report had found traces of the nerve agent VX on Kim Jong-nam's face.

THE VX-FACTOR

The history of nerve agents dates back to Nazi Germany. At the headquarters of IG Farben, one of the world's largest chemical and pharmaceutical companies in the 1930s, a research team headed by Gerhard Schrader accidentally discovered the first class of nerve agents, the so-called G-Series, after trying to develop new varieties of pesticides.

What they instead synthesised was Tabun, a highly toxic, colourless liquid. Incidentally, Tabun would have been the toxin of choice if Albert Speer, German minister of armaments and war production, had gone through with his plan to assassinate Adolf Hitler in 1945. IG Farben scientists would go on to create the more lethal nerve agents, including Sarin and Soman. IG Farben also held the patent to Zyklon B, the lethal pesticide used in the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau and other Nazi extermination camps. After World War II, 13 members of the company were found guilty of war crimes by American authorities.

The arrival of VX came with the second series of nerve agents, the V-series. During the 1950s, researchers at the British weapons research facility Porton Down were, much like Schrader's team, experimenting with new chemical combinations to make more effective pesticides.

After synthesising the V-series including VX (S-2 Diisopropylaminoethyl methylphosphonothiolate), the Imperial Chemical Industries, a British chemical company, put one on sale in 1954 under the name Amiton. It was quickly taken off the market after it was found to be too toxic for use. VX is thought to be the most toxic of all nerve gases.

Odourless and amber-coloured, VX works by disrupting the enzymes that relax our glands and muscles. Without the 'off-switch' enzyme, our muscles are constantly stimulated, leading to high blood pressure, convulsions and, eventually, paralysis. The typical cause of death because of VX poisoning is asphyxiation. It is estimated that as little as ten milligrams of the nerve agent applied to the skin is enough to be fatal.

AGENTS OF ATROCITY

After its creation, VX went on to have a notorious history. Alongside the more commonly cited mustard gas, it is believed that Saddam Hussein's forces used VX during the 1980s in the genocide committed against the Kurdish people, particularly during the Halabja chemical attack.

Years later, a member of Japan's Aum Shinrikyo, or doomsday cult, synthesised VX to kill a suspected turncoat on the streets of Osaka. Aum Shinrikyo would later find notoriety after its members released the nerve agent Sarin on the Tokyo subway system in 1995, killing 12 people and injuring hundreds. Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria is also thought to have developed stockpiles of VX, although most was surrendered in 2013.

THE BLINK OF AN EYE

KIM JONG-NAM'S ASSASSINATION TOOK ONLY A MATTER OF SECONDS. HERE IS HOW IT HAPPENED

1. Kim Jong-nam stands by the airport's self check-in counter as the two attackers approach. One approaches from the toilets, the other from in front of the counter.

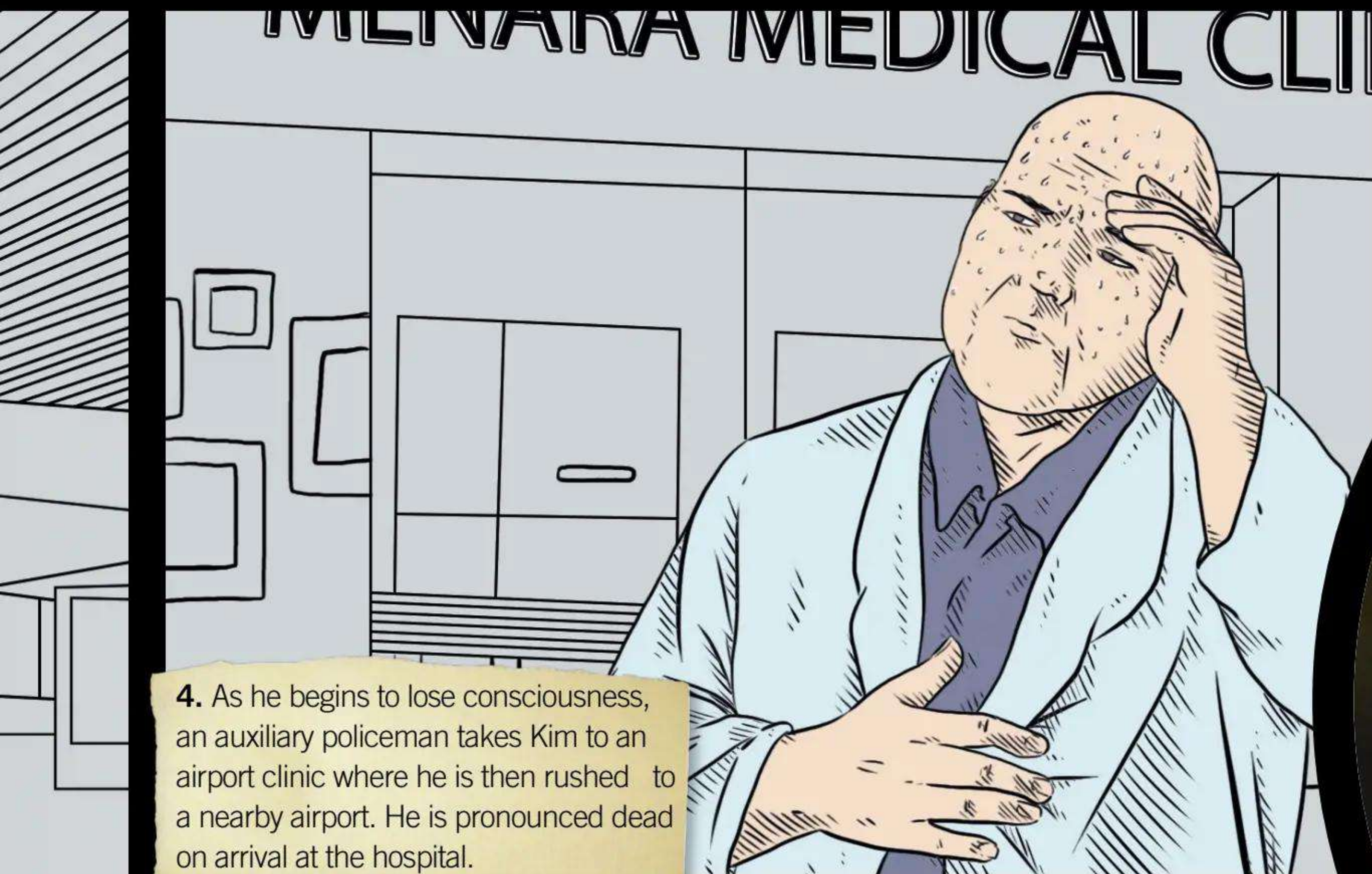
2. Within five seconds, one attacker stands in front of Kim and sprays him, the other smothers his face in what is believed to be a cloth covered in the VX nerve agent.

In 1993, after the majority of nations signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, VX was included in a list of banned chemical weapons, and is today classified as a 'weapon of mass destruction' by the United Nations. It is thought that at the time the Convention was signed, there were 19,586 tons of VX stockpiled worldwide. By 2015, 98 per cent had been destroyed. North Korea, however, is one of only a handful of countries that are not signatories to the Convention and is thought to still possess great quantities of nerve agents. In 2012, South Korea's defence ministry estimated that Pyongyang possesses as much as 5,000 metric tons of chemical weapons, including the nerve gases VX and Sarin. North Korea is today believed to have the third largest stockpile of chemical weapons, after the USA and Russia.

“WHOEVER MASTERMINDED THE HIT DIDN'T CARE THAT ALL ROADS EVENTUALLY LED BACK TO NORTH KOREA”



3. Kim Jong-nam heads towards the information counter, complaining of a headache. Here, he utters his last words: "Very painful, very painful, I was sprayed liquid."



4. As he begins to lose consciousness, an auxiliary policeman takes Kim to an airport clinic where he is then rushed to a nearby airport. He is pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital.

CLEAN HANDS

It was the use of VX that pointed Malaysian authorities towards North Korean complicity. Indeed, the use of such a deadly, and illegal, nerve agent sparked rumours that Pyongyang preferred a bold statement over a quiet kill. A swift knife in the back or a pistol to the head would, arguably, have had the same intended consequence. Yet whoever masterminded the hit didn't care that all roads eventually led back to North Korea.

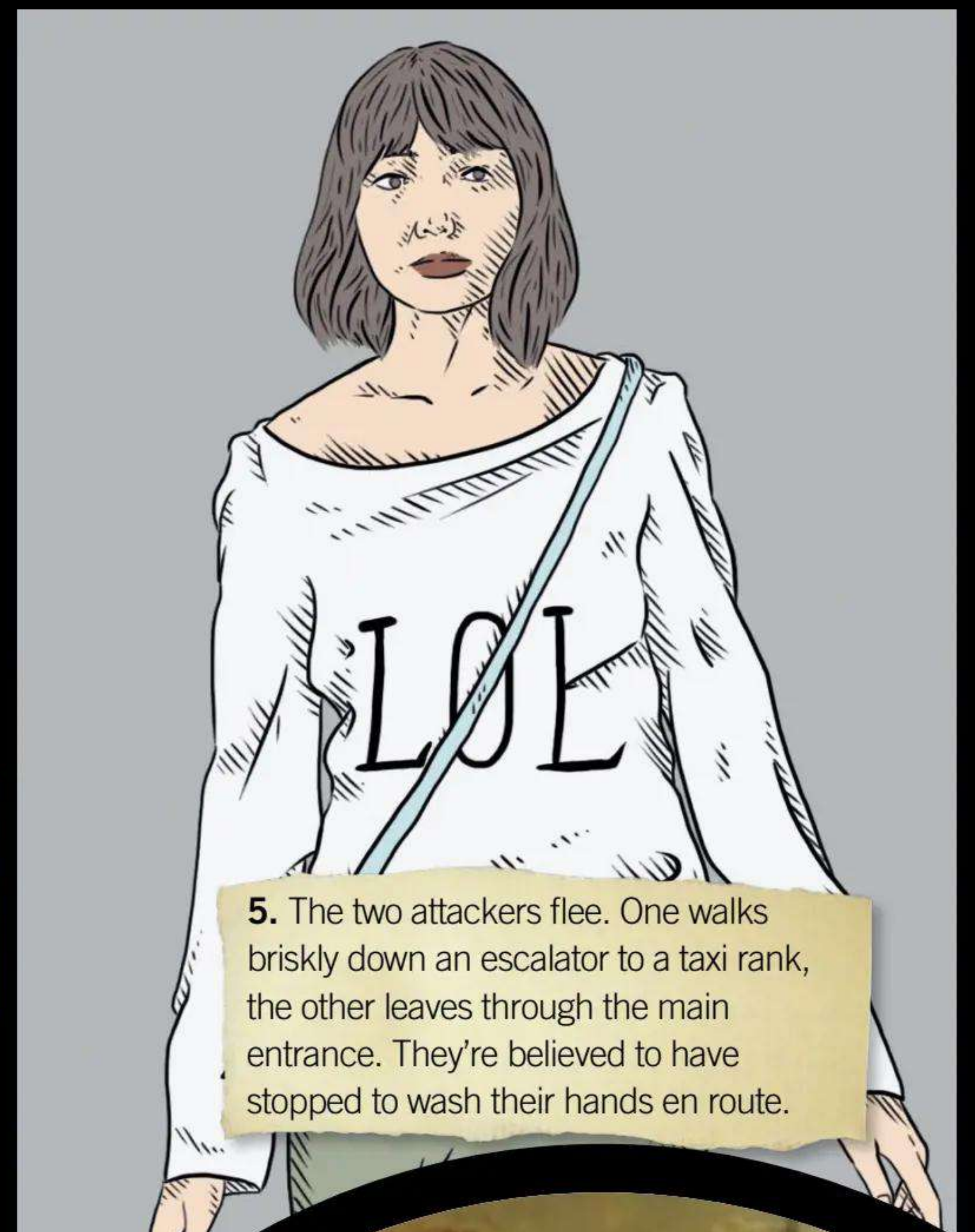
Nonetheless, a considerable degree of planning went in to the execution of the hit. Questions were immediately raised: if VX was used in the assassination, why didn't the killers succumb to the toxins as well? As Pyongyang tried to extricate itself from the murder, its embassy in Malaysia released a statement asking, "How is it possible that these female suspects could still be alive?"

One theory put forward by chemical experts is that the two assailants each used a different precursor that goes into making VX. By themselves, the precursors are not lethal, a reason why the two suspects were not killed. However,

Malaysian police have said that one of the suspects possibly suffered from side-effects, including vomiting. Moreover, by smuggling only the chemical components into Malaysia, it would be far easier to bypass the authorities and avoid detection. This theory now appears to be accepted by all concerned. Another question, however, remains unanswered: did the two female suspects actually know what they were doing?

LOLS AND PRANKS

On 28 February 2017, Siti Aisyah, of Indonesia, and Doan Thi Huong, of Vietnam, were charged with the murder of Kim Jong-nam in a Kuala Lumpur court. Murder carries a mandatory death sentence in Malaysia. However, both pleaded not guilty and claimed they knew neither what chemical they were handling nor the intended target.



5. The two attackers flee. One walks briskly down an escalator to a taxi rank, the other leaves through the main entrance. They're believed to have stopped to wash their hands en route.



ABOVE Kim Jong-nam is seen slumped in an airport chair moments after being poisoned. He passed away en route to a nearby hospital

Aisyah, 25, grew up in a Jakarta slum. She married a Malaysian national and lived in Kuala Lumpur until their separation in 2012. She found a new Malaysian boyfriend, who was also arrested in February but later released. After being picked up by the police, Aisyah claimed that she thought she was participating in a Japanese TV prank show and was only rubbing baby oil in to the face of Kim Jong-nam. According to the Indonesian authorities, Aisyah said that she had participated in three or four other 'pranks', which involved spraying water into the faces of men, supposedly for a TV show called 'Just For Laughs', and had been paid 80 or so dollars each time.

Indeed, relatives of Aisyah in Indonesia told the media that they believed she had been hired to perform in a comedic film and had travelled to China for the work. Aisyah claimed she was told that Kim Jong-nam – who she didn't recognise – was to be the last target and thought that innocuous liquid was to be used.

The Vietnamese suspect, Thi Huong, 28, also claims she was duped into the crime. "They told me it was a prank. I did not know it was meant to kill him," she told the police. Thi Huong is believed to have been born in Nam Dinh, in northern Vietnam, not far from Hanoi. Interviews with her family revealed that they knew little about her life after she left home aged 18.

A number of media reports suggest that Thi Huong was a contestant on Vietnam's version of *Pop Idol* in June 2016. A photograph posted on her Facebook page shows her posing in the same 'LOL' T-shirt that was worn during the attack on Kim Jong-nam.

Chinese media has also reported that Thi Huong and Aisyah were working as escorts in China for several months before the attack. It is believed that in the country's massage parlours or karaoke rooms, they met a North Korean spy who introduced the pair to four more North Koreans who, apparently, duped them into believing they were taking part in a prank video. The Malaysian police identified these four men as North Korean nationals – Rhi Ji-hyon, Hong Song-hac, O Jong-gil and Ri Jae-nam – who fled the country following the murder. Unconfirmed reports suggest they travelled from Kuala Lumpur to Jakarta, Dubai, Vladivostok and then back to Pyongyang. Reports also claim that Ri Ji-hyon is the son of the former North Korean ambassador to Hanoi. Using his fluent Vietnamese, he is believed to have lured Thi Huong into the sinister plot.

BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT

The Malaysian authorities were having none of this. National Police Chief Khalid Abu Bakar said that he thought the two suspects knew exactly what they were doing because airport CCTV footage is thought to show them heading to the bathroom straight after smearing Kim Jong-nam's face. "Of course they knew," Bakar said at a press conference in February. "She was very aware that it was toxic and that she needed to wash her hands."

Bakar also suggested that a North Korean individual had placed the poisonous compounds on their hands moments before the attack and then told the pair to wash their hands

straight away. The implicated North Korean individual is in custody in Malaysia.

Moreover, Thi Huong's claim of innocence has been questioned given her behaviour days before the attack. It is not known when she arrived in Malaysia but media reports claim she checked into the two-star Qlassic Hotel on 11 February. She requested a room with no window and paid with a stack of cash. The next day, 12 February, she checked into the CityView Hotel where she asked to borrow scissors from the reception before cutting her hair in her room. The following morning, reception staff remember her leaving the hotel early, dressed in the 'LOL' T-shirt. At 8.20am, the attack on Kim Jong-nam took place. Staff then say she returned to the hotel "relaxed" – she "didn't look angry or worried" one told reporters. In fact, her only complaint was that the WiFi wasn't working in her room.

In the afternoon, she checked out and left for the nearby SkyStar Hotel, staying only one night. Her whereabouts afterwards are not known but she was later arrested by police while waiting in the airport terminal where she had killed Kim Jong-nam.

"If you ask me, 'Do her movements indicate that she was an intelligence operative?' then I would say yes," a Kuala Lumpur-based private investigator was quoted as saying by the media. "That is how they operate. Change of appearance, cash transactions, no paper trail and constantly on the move."

THE FALLOUT

The fate of the two suspects was decided by the Malaysian courts in 2019: murder charges were dropped for both women and Aisyah walked free, while Huong served just a month in prison. The North Korean suspects, some of whom were holed up in the North Korean embassy in Kuala Lumpur, eventually returned to Pyongyang. Malaysia's police chief, Khalid Abu Bakar, said that a senior diplomat at the North Korean embassy and an employee of the North Korean state-owned airline Air Koryo were also wanted for questioning. Another North Korean, who was not identified, was also being sought.

In the aftermath, both countries placed travel restrictions on one another, so the embassy staff and diplomats of each became captive in the other's capital. The Mexican stand-off would be tense enough on its own, but the geopolitical fallout added to the mix. Months after the killing, North Korea launched test missiles that landed close to Japanese waters, and the USA began security measures with its South Korean ally, keen to safeguard the Pacific should Kim Jong-un's itchy trigger finger hover too close to the nuclear launch button. China, a relatively close ally of Pyongyang, was left to weigh up its options, an intermediary in what some commentators have described as a possible build-up to war.

The murder of Kim Jong-nam in broad daylight, in a busy airport, in a foreign nation, was the climax of decades of assassination attempts. His killers, two young Asian women who stood trial for a crime that carries the death penalty, held one of the most lethal nerve agents ever created. Did they know what they held? Did they know who they would go on to kill? Did they really think it was just a prank?

RIGHT After a forensic sweep of the airport terminal that took place days after the assassination, Malaysian officials declared the area "safe", as no traces of the nerve agent that killed Kim Jong-nam were found



ABOVE The women arrested over Kim Jong-nam's death: Indonesian Siti Aisyah (top) and Vietnamese Doan Thi Huong (bottom)

“ HER WHEREABOUTS AFTERWARDS ARE NOT KNOWN BUT SHE WAS LATER ARRESTED BY POLICE WHILE WAITING IN THE AIRPORT TERMINAL WHERE SHE HAD KILLED KIM JONG-NAM ”

NOT SAFE ANYWHERE

NORTH KOREA HAS A HISTORY OF COMMITTING ASSASSINATION ABROAD

For a hermetic nation, North Korea's assassins have picked up plenty of air miles. Its long-standing enemy, South Korea, is often the target. In 1968, 21 elite commands crossed the southern border with the intention of infiltrating the Blue House – South Korea's presidential residence – to assassinate President Park Chung-hee. They got 100 metres away from the palace gates when guards opened fire. All but one were killed. 15 years later, a bomb exploded in Rangoon, then the capital of Myanmar, moments before South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan arrived. 17 South Korean officials, including four ministers, were killed. In more recent years, South Koreans have also been killed in Russia, while Japanese citizens were kidnapped in the 1980s so that the North Korean assassins could learn the local customs and language to be used for disguise.



Malaysian armed police guarding the North Korean embassy in Kuala Lumpur. Officials there were barred from leaving in the aftermath of the killing in a tit-for-tat response

JUSTICE FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

A WASHINGTON STATE SERIAL KILLER AVOIDED DETECTION FOR OVER 20 YEARS, BUT THE HEROIC ACTIONS OF ONE VICTIM FINALLY HELPED TO BRING THE MANIAC DOWN

WORDS MARTYN CONTERIO

WHAT	SERIAL MURDER
WHERE	SPOKANE, WASHINGTON, USA
WHEN	1990

BACKGROUND

Spokane, Washington, is an ex-industrial city located in the remote and drier far eastern part of the Pacific Northwest state, the population surrounded by the natural beauty of wooded mountains and prairies – the ideal image of the rugged American landscape. Here, in 1990, local police saw a sudden spike in prostitute homicides. The bodies were naked or partially clothed, were each discovered on the banks of the Spokane River, and each had been shot at close range. The three victims, Yolanda Sapp, Nickie Lowe and Kathleen Brisbois, were known to each other and worked the same red-light district drag on Sprague Avenue in the East Central neighbourhood.

On 22 February, Yolanda Sapp was found on the north bank of the Spokane River. The coroner noted scrapes to her head and forearms, as well as three bullet wounds, which entered her back and exited the front. The size of the bullet holes suggested a small-calibre pistol. A floral blanket was also recovered. From this a weak trace of DNA was extracted that did not belong to Sapp.

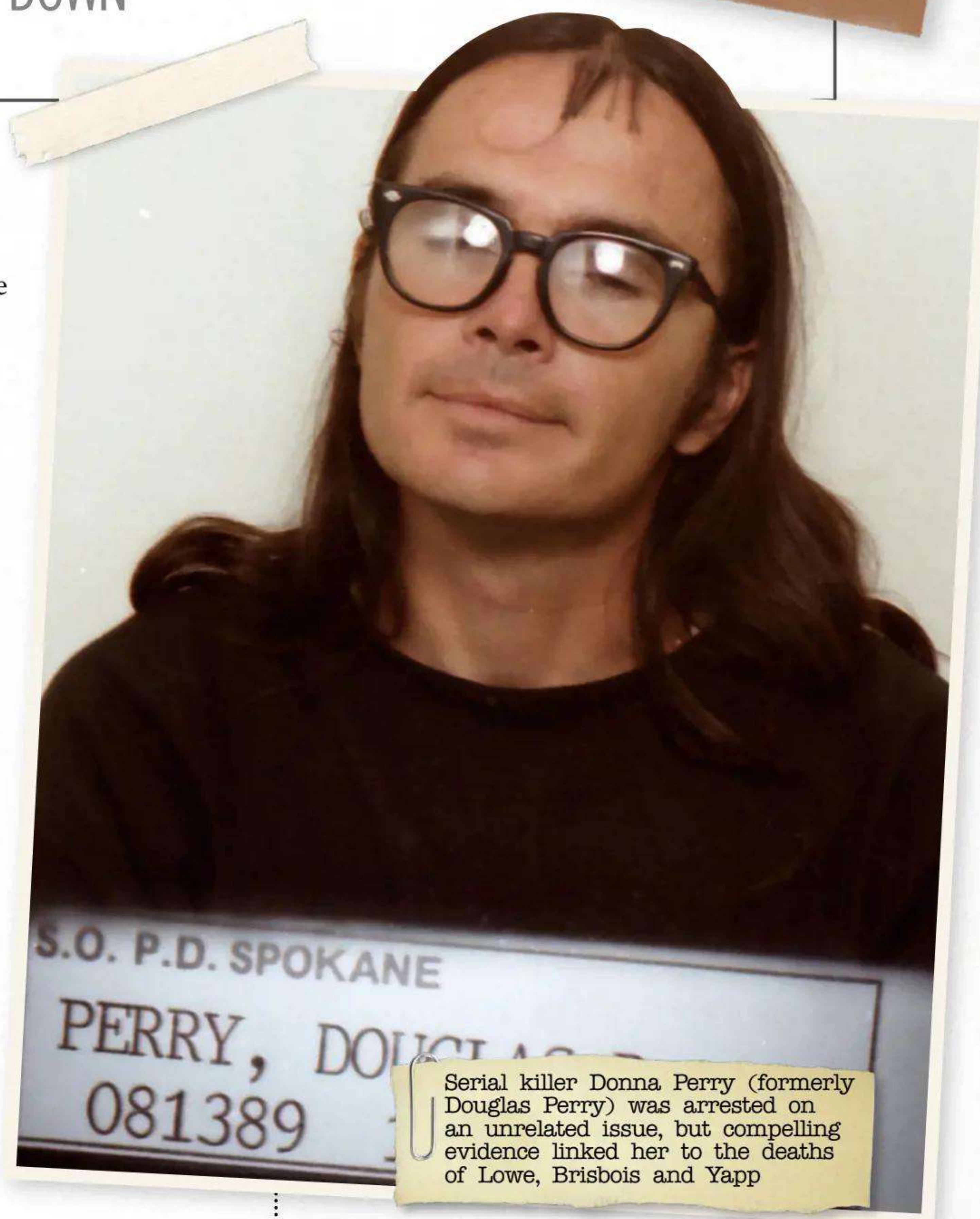
A little over a month later, the corpse of Nickie Lowe was located beneath the Greene Street Bridge. Her body had been posed: legs up against a guard rail, her back and head on the ground, underwear lowered to the knees. Marks denoted she had been dragged to this spot. A single bullet to the chest caused her death, and this time the casing from a .22-calibre weapon was recovered from the crime scene. Detectives found Miss Lowe's personal belongings in a dumpster on Sprague Avenue. Found in Lowe's purse was

a tub of lubricant, from which the police were able to lift latent fingerprints (from a middle finger and index finger).

As winter gave way to springtime, Kathleen Brisbois was next to be killed, in a then unincorporated part of Spokane Valley County. This crime scene yielded more evidence than the others. On 15 May, when police scoured the riverbank for clues, they found drops of dried blood and clumps of hair. Brisbois knew she was going to die, but she had fought back as best she could, only succumbing to her attacker after being repeatedly struck on the head with a blunt instrument and shot three times, the bullets entering her head, shoulder and chest. But who was doing this?

TURNING POINT

It happened by pure chance, a stroke of luck, a serendipitous event 22 years later, long after the case had turned cold. A retired detective in the White Elephant gun store saw a person he knew to be a felon buying



Serial killer Donna Perry (formerly Douglas Perry) was arrested on an unrelated issue, but compelling evidence linked her to the deaths of Lowe, Brisbois and Yapp

ammunition. He reported the individual. The ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms) agency subsequently made an arrest, with federal charges brought on illegal possession for 12 firearms and thousands of rounds of ammunition. This is where the case entered unexpected territory and presented a twist worthy of a Hollywood thriller.

Back in 2005, when handed the files related to the three old murders,

The lifeless body of Kathleen Bribois (38) was found in an isolated spot on the west bank of the Spokane River, in the Spokane Valley area. Vital DNA evidence was found beneath her fingernails



Nickie Lowe (34) was the second identified person Perry killed. She was discovered under the Greene Street bridge partially nude. A single gunshot wound to the chest area caused her death



26-year-old victim Yolanda Sapp was shot three times in the back by Perry. Her naked body was found on an embankment by the Spokane River



“Federal agents had broken down Perry’s door and arrested him for possession of a pipe bomb. They found 49 handguns and 20,000 rounds of ammo”

investigators resubmitted evidence for DNA testing, knowing the technology had improved significantly since the 1990s. In 2009, the full DNA profile of a man was recovered from skin samples underneath nail clippings taken during the autopsy on Kathleen Bribois. They submitted the DNA to databases... but no dice.

After the arrest for illegal gun ownership in 2012, Spokane law enforcement finally found a potential suspect. On 14 September 2012, CODIS (the national Combined DNA Index System) gave them a match. The suspect’s DNA was that of a male. Going to interview the person, detectives were flummoxed when they walked Donna R. Perry.

Detectives asked Perry how did the DNA get onto Kathleen Bribois’ fingernails? Initially resistant and pretending to be baffled by the accusations, Perry attempted to use her transgender status – the killer travelled to Thailand in 2000 for gender reassignment surgery – as a demarcation point between the past and the present, an excuse that flabbergasted detectives and left the transgender community distinctly unimpressed when news stations and papers began reporting on the trial. “Douglas didn’t stop. Donna stopped it,” Perry finally blurted out. When prodded by the interviewers, Perry further responded, “I’m not going to admit I killed anybody. I didn’t. Donna has

killed nobody.” “Doug did?” Detective Mark Burbridge asked. “I don’t know if Doug did or not. It’s 20 years ago and I have no idea whether he did or not,” Perry summarised.

AFTERMATH

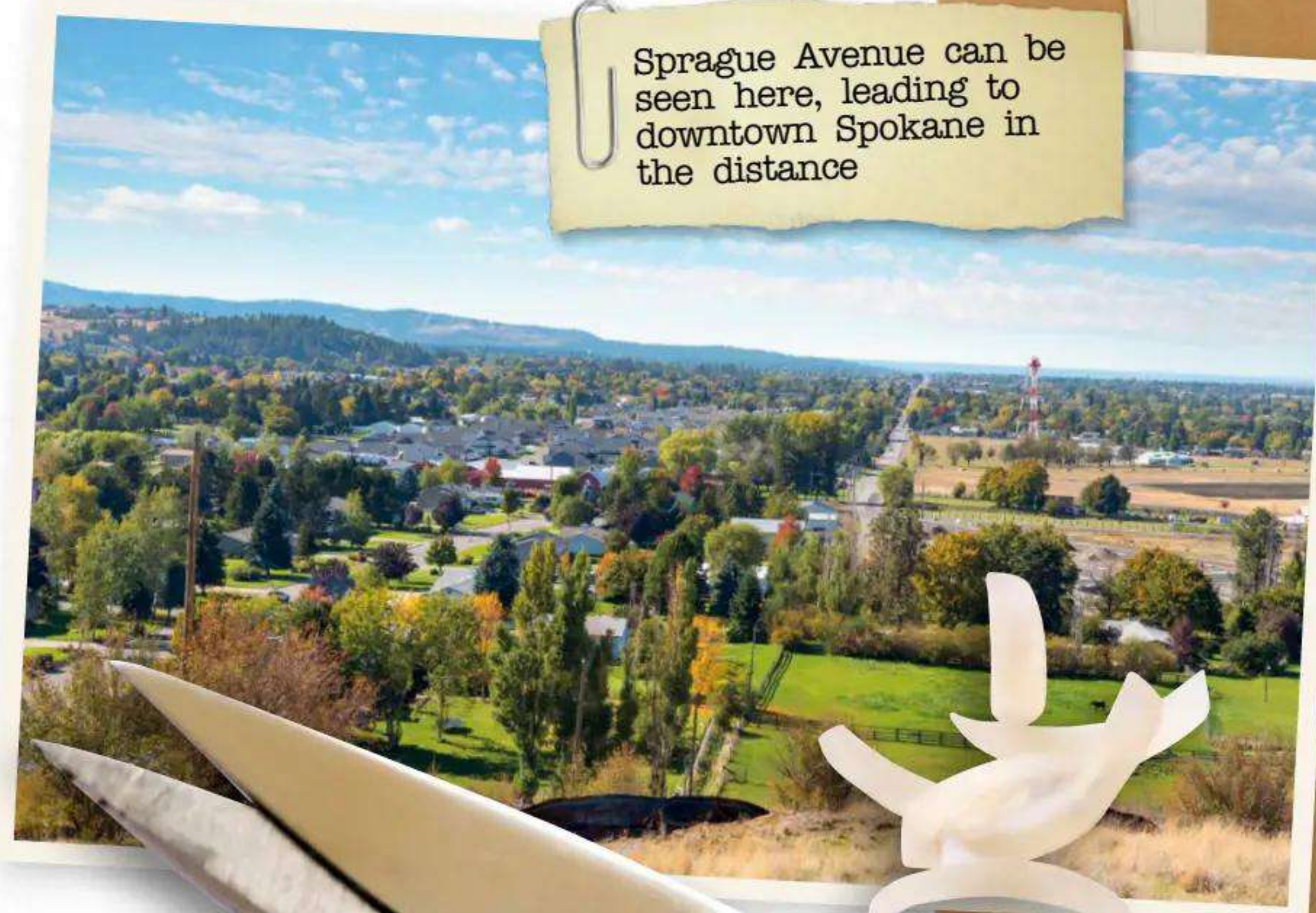
Charged with three counts of first-degree murder, detectives began to piece together the disturbing life of Perry, including an obsession with guns and prostitutes, as well as conflicted views about women, including their capacity to birth life. One cellmate said Perry had told her the gender reassignment surgery was to throw off the law, because nobody would suspect an elderly woman.

Perry had a history of violence and charges at state and federal level, including a 1989 rap for soliciting a prostitute. The year before, federal agents had broken down Perry’s front door and arrested him for possession of a pipe bomb. They found 49 handguns – including .22-calibre pistols – and 20,000 rounds of ammo. Yet until 2012 Perry avoided detection because DNA samples were not taken as standard practice at the time of the last arrest in 1994.

Kathleen Bribois fought like hell for her life and she clawed at Perry’s skin, getting enough of it under her fingernails to provide a full DNA profile. Her instinct for survival enabled justice to be

delivered from beyond the grave. The DNA from the fingernails was accompanied by weaker but identifiable DNA from a vaginal swab, forensics done on a 1969 International Scout vehicle Perry once owned, the fingerprints on the lube bottle, and incriminating witness statements. At trial, though not without its controversies, the jury decided Perry was guilty. The serial killer is now serving a life-without-parole sentence at a facility in Gig Harbor, Washington.

Sprague Avenue can be seen here, leading to downtown Spokane in the distance



DNA found under Bribois’ nails proved crucial

© Alamy, Spokane County Sheriff's Office

GRANNY RIPPER

IN THE DARKEST DAYS OF 2015, TAMARA SAMSONOVA SIMMERED A SAUCEPAN ON HER STOVE IN HER KITCHEN. INSIDE IT, BOILING AWAY, WAS THE SEVERED HEAD OF ONE OF HER 11 ALLEGED VICTIMS

WORDS DR K CHARLIE OUGHTON

The Slavic people in the regions of Russia tell tales of the crone, Tamara Samsonova. Hers is a modern day reworking of the adventures of Baba Yaga, the mythological creature, perhaps a witch, who killed and (some say) ate her victims, placing their skulls on the posts of her home. Baba Yaga still looms large over the family fireside, a caution to adventurous children, but in Samsonova's real-life case, it is the adults who should have been more wary. The murderous madam did not care to hold her temper when she thought others had contravened acceptable standards of courtesy, and she would set her society on the straight and narrow, even if it meant killing the discourteous – roughly translated as anyone who annoyed her.

THE ORIGINS OF BABA YAGA

Samsonova is much like the historic Miss Yaga, an enchantress associated with crows, cats, snakes and toads. Sure enough, she has the glinting quick eyes of a bird on the search for its next tasty morsel. Sure enough, snakelike is her hair – the wild waves of an old woman who has no need for fashion and cares primarily for function. Baba Yaga is said to live on the edge of villages in a hut mounted upon bone-like chicken legs – a superiorly strange sight to the law-abiding good folk of the town. It seems somewhat fitting, therefore, that one of the key images we have of Samsonova sees her descending the ghostly white knobbly banister of her apartment while calmly carrying her prey. Her poor quarry in this instance was her former lodger, Valentina Ulanova, the victim a similarly traceable part of our historic anti-heroine's saga. Baba's true face in Russia is that of many a matriarch, for she is clever and can be caring as

well as cruel. Indeed, the original folk tales state that Baba is sought out for advice by the brave or just blindly unwary, for when help or gain is available, it comes at a cost.

Samsonova was quite literally caught between caring for and curing her charges. Her crimes were only discovered when dogs sniffed out the corpse of her former lodger. Ulanova, 79, had requested lodging from the younger woman, together with her accompanying personal care, for the price of a rosy Ruble's rent. Tamara was happy to acquiesce if her house was 'kept' – the washing up done by her tenant. Unfortunately for Samsonova, Ulanova refused to touch even a teacup.

THE LOVERS GRIMM

So adamant was Valentina that she would not lift a finger. She perhaps felt herself to have outwitted the witch as she swore she would leave if pushed further – she knew the lonely lady had grown to love her in some way. Unfortunately, this led Samsonova to change tact by reducing the need for the cups in the first place. As has been reported, Tamara tipped an overdose of the sleeping pill Phenazepamum into her companion's cup, sending her into a deep slumber. The rest would be eternal for Valentina.

Finding her well-fed companion too weighty too move, Samsonova borrowed tools from her neighbours and

RIGHT 68-year-old Tamara Samsonova is suspected of killing up to 11 people over two decades. She has explained her crimes in detail to Russian authorities, going as far as re-enacting how she cut up one of her victims with a model dummy



RIGHT At a court hearing, Samsonova told a judge: "I am guilty and I deserve to be punished". She later blew a kiss to the court reporters. When the judge announced that she would be kept in custody, she clapped her hands and smiled

dismembered the unfortunate Valentina still alive. The doughty dame dispatched the larger woman bit by bit in bags and popped her body (minus the head) next to the pond of the Dimitrova Street district of old Saint Petersburg. The Investigative Committee, Russia's serious crime unit, commented that organs had been removed, leading to the whisper that the wicked woman had consumed the choicest cuts of Valentina and, indeed, some of her other charges. It certainly didn't help her case that she was seen removing what is thought to have been the divine Valentina's carefully separated head in a relatively large cooking pot, presumably so as not to spill its most particular juices.

It reportedly took this dangerous domestic goddess two hours to prepare and dispatch the petrifying mixture. She set flesh from sinew and blood from bone to hide the tracks that were her own, all while her neighbours slept sound around her. A scary tale indeed, only it did not end there. When sniffer dogs found the pieces of her paramour, more bodies came to light. Two lodgers had been cut up in lieu (said Tamara) of the time when she tired of their company.

Her husband, forgone conclusion though this may have been, has been beyond sight since she reported him missing in 2005, though his body (if that is all that remains of him) has never been found. A businessman, bereft of his arms and legs, also lost his head to her upon their meeting 12 years ago.

BLACK ARTS AND TEA LEAVES

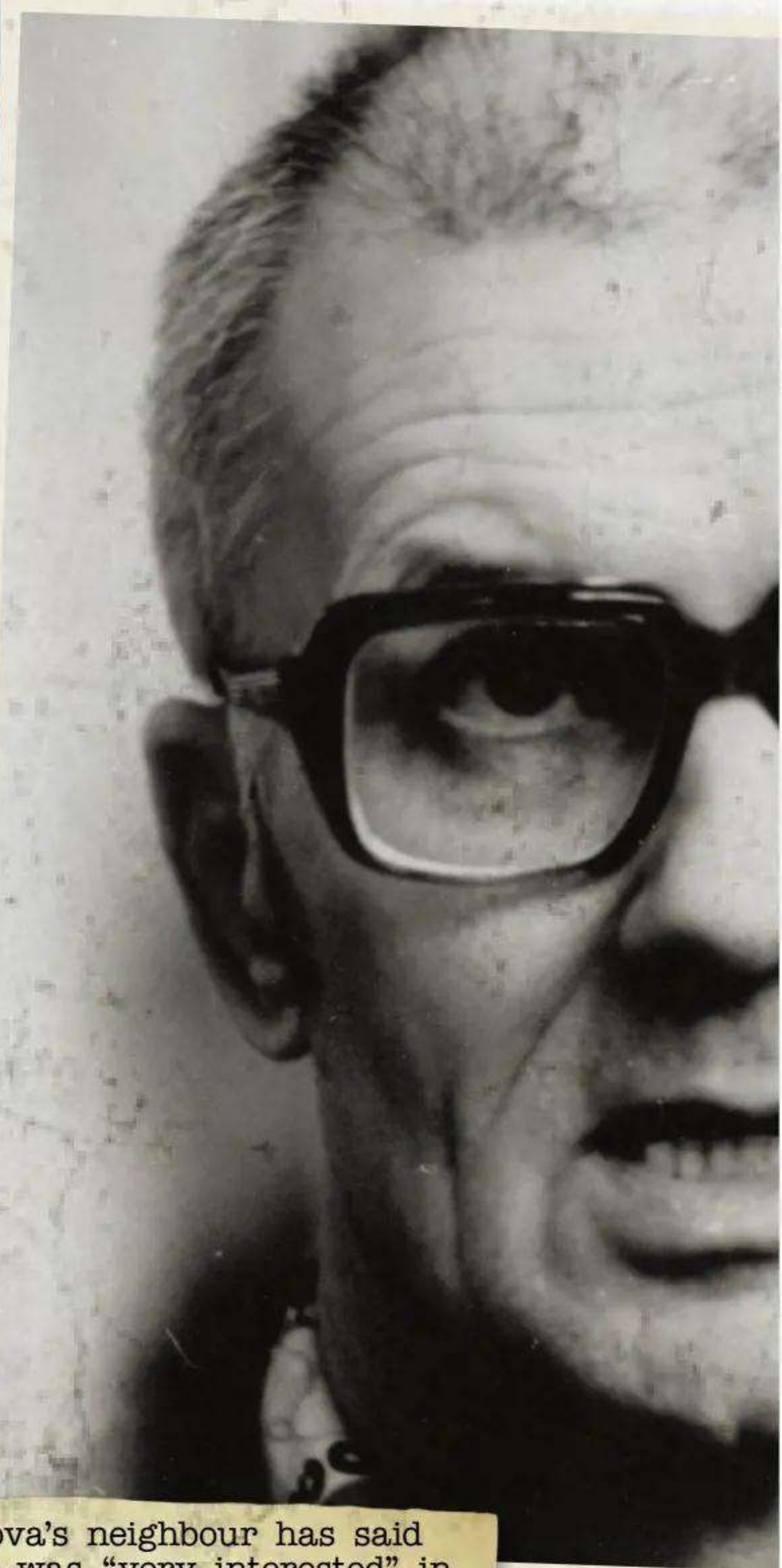
Upon the discovery of her alleged crimes, it became clear that Samsonova really was thought of as something of a witch, and this had perhaps led to her activities. Among her possessions were found books on black magic and astrology, next to her personal notebooks that detailed her dark deeds. They demonstrated that she could speak several tongues – French and German – and even seemed to take grim delight in recording her vile cookery experiments alongside her thoughts on more recognisable elevents (disappointingly straying from magical fare, she was a coffee drinker rather than a tea leaf reader). A horrific hostess, she even provided disposal advice, with one of her diary entries allegedly stating: "I killed my tenant Volodya, cut him to pieces in the bathroom with a knife and put the pieces of his body in



SLAVIC SLASHER CELEBRITIES

THE DEAD RED RIPPER'S SHADOW STILL STALKS – AND APPEARED IN MURDEROUS SAMSONOVA'S SICK MIND

Andrei Chikatilo is reported to have been a direct influence on Tamara Samsonova's grisly crimes, according to one of her neighbours. Like Samsonova, Chikatilo hails from the Slavic region and, like her, he had a respectable job and was at points integrated into society through his work as a teacher. However, known variously as The Butcher of Rostov, The Ripper of Rostov and The Red Ripper, he stole the lives of more than 52 women and children as well as assaulting them and mutilating their bodies. He, like Samsonova, had a penchant for removing parts of his victims' corpses, with their eyes and other facial features being a firm favourite. Chikatilo enjoyed his awful activities and played to the press, often posing with a smile and apparently proud of his notoriety. He was assessed for psychiatric disorders but found to be legally sane. He was executed by a firing squad in 1990.



Samsonova's neighbour has said that she was "very interested" in serial killer Andrei Chikatilo

TAMARA'S TRASH TRUDGE

REMARKABLE CCTV IMAGES SHOW THE RIPPER GRAN DISPOSING OF HER VICTIM'S BODY IN BAGS AND A 'BOIL' POT



25-07-2015 02.21

Wearing a rather fetching and easily identifiable blue overcoat, Samsonova lugs the heavy-looking bin bag of remains out of the door. She then straightens her back before turning to lock the entrance firmly behind her. She appears to be the epitome of elderly security-consciousness.

25-07-2015 03.02

The grotesque 'granny' (wearing a rather handsome headscarf) can be seen getting rid of the household waste of a witch. She is presumably keeping the place neat and tidy in conscientious consideration of the neighbour coming down the stairs – it is surely her civil duty, after all.



25-07-2015 03.54

Ablly lugging the awkward bags down several flights of stairs, the sprightly senior returns for her all-important saucepan containing a gory gruel – her victim's head. She positions her thumbs carefully over the lid so as not to drop, or slop, its cadaverous contents.



“ SHE SET FLESH FROM SINEW AND BLOOD FROM BONE TO HIDE THE TRACKS THAT WERE HER OWN ”

plastic bags and threw them away in the different parts of Frunzensky district.”

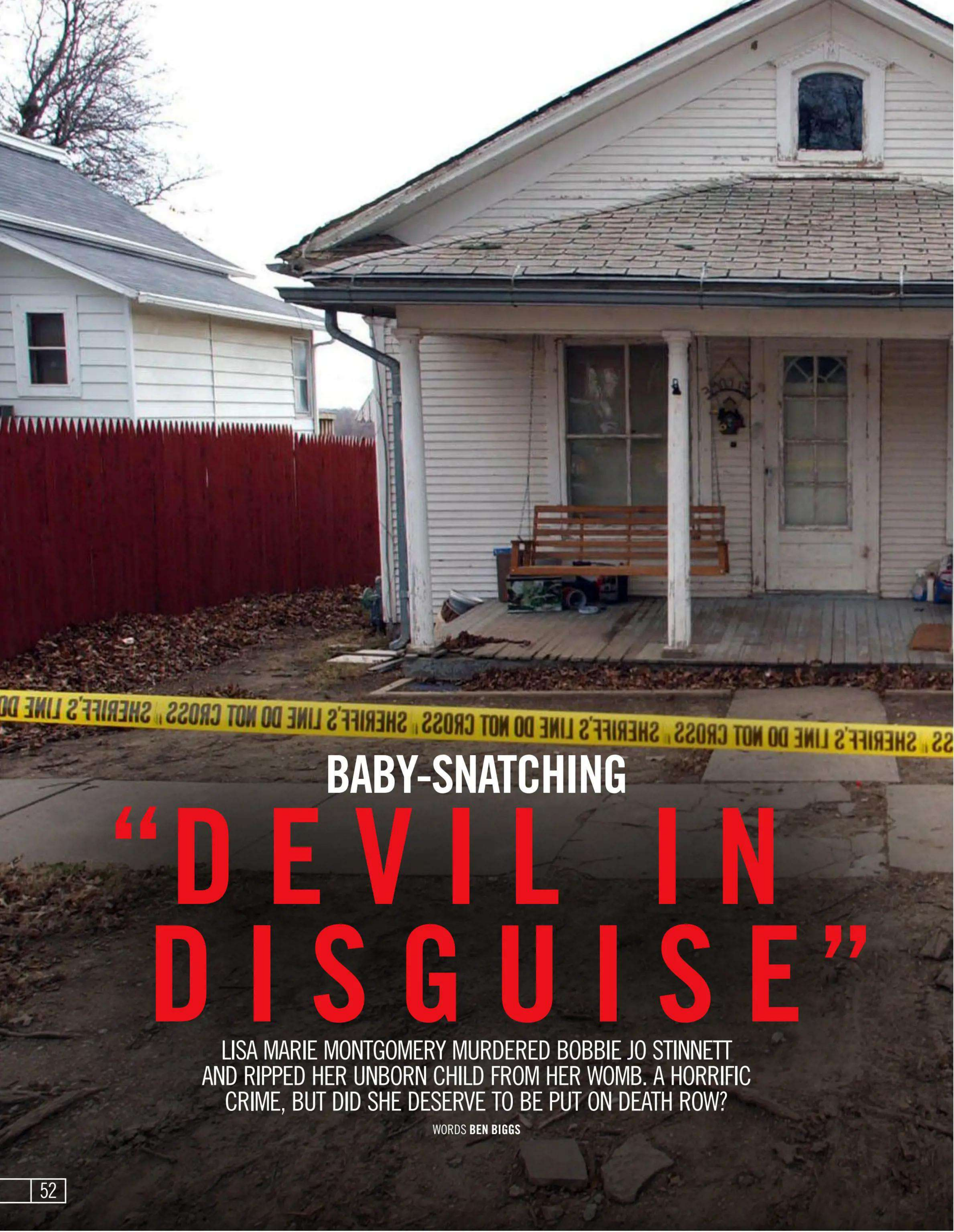
FEARFUL FANTASY

Only, like in most fairy stories, there is more than just a sprinkle of fantasy in this feisty lady's claims. The fabled cannibalism is just that – it is an assumption based on the absence of Valentina's and the other victims' body parts, which (it has been commented) was most likely for reasons of identity concealment rather than Samsonova's alleged taste for human tartare. Of the male lodgers that she claims to have 'offed', one has miraculously resurfaced, very much alive and is now a key witness in her case – a voice against a possibly loathed landlady, rather than a wicked witch. Her diary claims seem as much the result of a mundane life and a bored mind than a malicious maleficent and it has been reported that she spent several months in psychiatric care prior to her arrest.

Indeed, here seems a lady happy to make her own legend and neighbours report that she had an active interest in the

case of Soviet serial killer the 'Red Ripper' Andrei Chikatilo, who murdered and ate at least 53 in the 70s through to the 90s, before he was caught, tried and executed. She supposedly collected many news clippings recounting his infamy. Perhaps seeing her life as a story of old, she told her trial judge: “I was getting ready for this court action for dozens of years. It was all done deliberately. With this last murder I closed the chapter. I'm guilty and I deserve to be punished.” She then blew kisses to eager reporters, perhaps in case they should fail to spot her star appeal. She seems, somewhat disturbingly, more a Granny Proto-stripper than a female Jack the Ripper and has made herself most available to the appropriate authorities. Ever a performer, she has been most obliging in showing just how she desiccated her victims using a model, captured on video specially to record her moment.

Samsonova faced the death penalty, which would have meant facing a Russian firing squad. But in a surprising twist, she was instead sent to a hospital in Kazan, southwest Russia, for compulsory psychiatric treatment, where she remains today – and likely for the rest of her life.

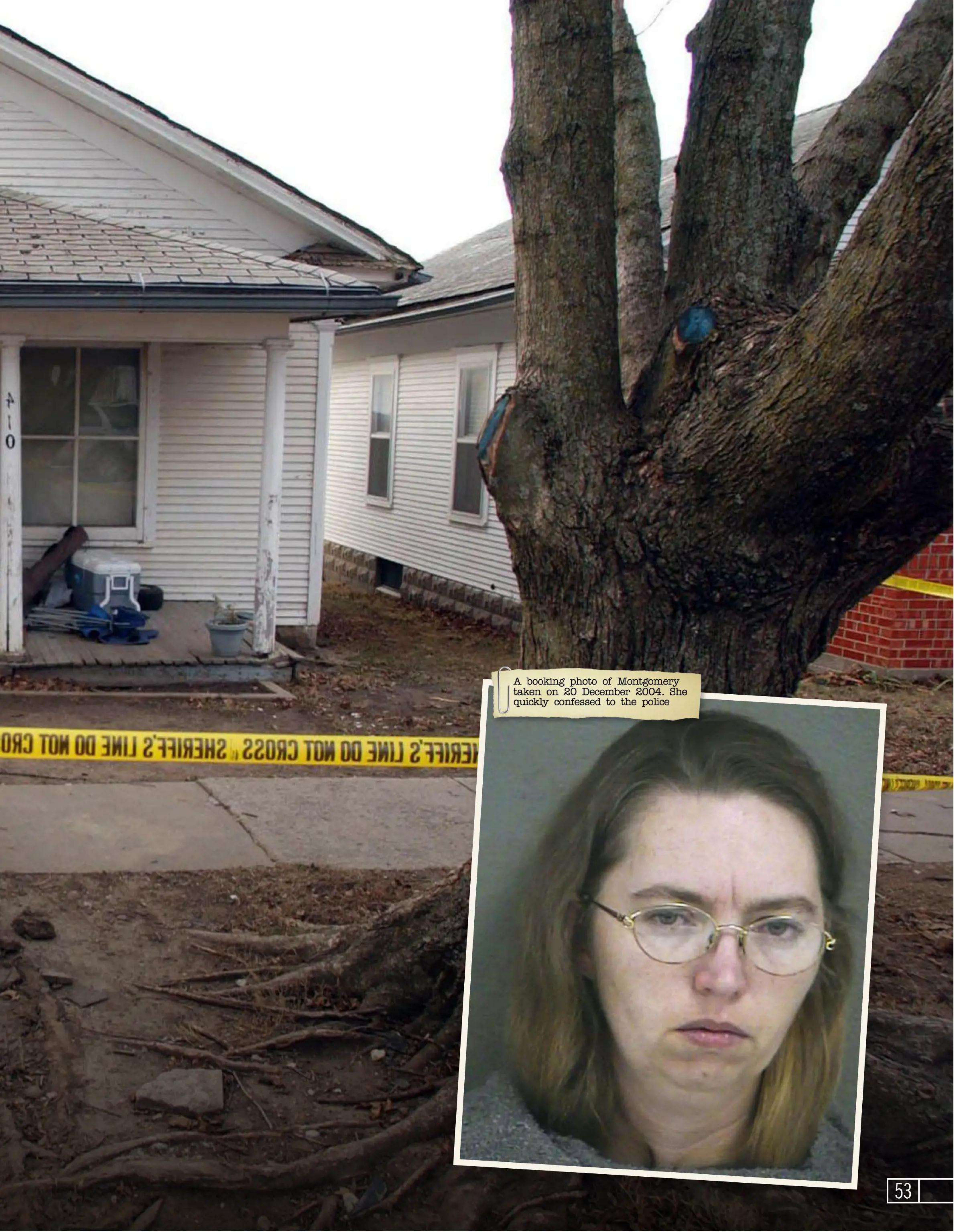


BABY-SNATCHING

“DEVIL IN DISGUISE”

LISA MARIE MONTGOMERY MURDERED BOBBIE JO STINNETT
AND RIPPED HER UNBORN CHILD FROM HER WOMB. A HORRIFIC
CRIME, BUT DID SHE DESERVE TO BE PUT ON DEATH ROW?

WORDS BEN BIGGS



A booking photo of Montgomery taken on 20 December 2004. She quickly confessed to the police





Bobbie Jo Stinnett had just turned 23 years old when she was brutally murdered for her unborn baby. She was found by her mother about an hour later, lying in a pool of blood



Bobbie Jo Stinnett's funeral

On 16 December 2004, Lisa Marie Montgomery drove 175 miles from her house in Kansas, over the state line into Skidmore, Missouri – approximate population 342, according to the census four years previously. This town straddles one main street flanked by old red brick buildings: grocery and hardware stores, a bar and the town hall – the lifeblood of such tiny settlements. Generations of farmers have been brought up and died here in Skidmore, people know each other by name, there's that sense of community you just don't get in the big city.

Montgomery turned down West Elm Street where the red brick was replaced by small wooden houses, and parked near number 410. Clutching a bag containing a length of rope, a sharp kitchen knife, a syringe and a surgical clamp, she got out of her car and knocked at the door. It was the home of Bobbie Jo Stinnett, a 23-year-old dog breeder who was heavily pregnant at the time. The two women had met at a dog show and then had some online interaction on a rat terrier forum called Ratter Chatter, but still, Bobbie Jo must have been surprised to see Montgomery on her doorstep. She had actually been expecting a visit from a Fairfax, Missouri woman by the name of Darlene Fischer, who was interested in buying one of her puppies. In fact, Darlene Fischer didn't exist, and Montgomery had no interest in purchasing a puppy – she had come for Bobbie Jo's unborn child. Montgomery overpowered the pregnant woman, strangled her with the rope, cut open her stomach, severed the umbilical cord and took Bobbie Jo's little girl away with her. The baby, Victoria Jo Stinnett, survived, but tragically her mother was pronounced dead at St. Francis Hospital in Maryville.

PREMEDITATED MADNESS

It's hard to overstate the horror of Montgomery's crime – there was clearly planning and forethought that went into it at least a day before it was carried out. Montgomery had established a false identity on Ratter Chatter so she could set up a meeting with Bobbie Jo. Her screen name was 'fischer4kids' and 'Darlene Fischer' had her own email address, so that they could chat via MSN Messenger without Bobbie Jo connecting her to Montgomery. Darlene Fischer was a red herring for the authorities to chase in the wake of Bobbie Jo's murder. But Montgomery sorely underestimated the resourcefulness of both the Sheriff's Office and the Ratter Chatter community.

At 4.22pm on Wednesday 15 December 2004, 'Darlene' had messaged Bobbie Jo on the forum: "I was recommended to you by [user name redacted] and have been unable to reach you by either phone or e-mail. Please get in touch with me soon as we are considering the purchase of one of your puppies and would like to ask you a few questions."

A few hours and some MSN messages later, at 7.44pm, Bobbie Jo replied: "Darlene, I've emailed you with the directions so we can meet. I do so hope that the email reaches you. Great chatting with you on messenger. And do look forward to chatting with you tomorrow am. Thanks [user name redacted], and talk to you soon, Darlene!"

As the awful news reports went viral the following morning, it didn't take long for other Ratter Chatter regulars to realise that Darlene would have met with Bobbie Jo on the same day that she was murdered. Forumites being forumites, they pieced together a breadcrumb trail of digital

evidence that linked 'Darlene' with Montgomery, whom they recalled having an online conversation with Bobbie Jo about both their current pregnancies. But Montgomery was not pregnant. She had been sterilised after her fourth child, so that was another complete fabrication – to what end isn't clear. Perhaps Montgomery had already targeted Bobbie Jo and was trying to assess what stage of pregnancy she was in, assess the likelihood of an unborn child surviving an amateur caesarian. "Now I'm just sick as heck," one woman wrote, "If this is true, she just posted to me not long ago that she was going to have her baby Thursday." Whatever Montgomery's reason, this lie alone had the hallmarks of someone who wasn't in her right mind.

By 8am on Friday 16 December 2004, less than 24 hours after Bobbie Jo's murder, one forumite had managed to trace the creation of Darlene's account back to Kansas. Alarm bells were ringing, and several Ratter Chatter members phoned the police with their suspicions. It took no time at all for the police to discover that Montgomery and Darlene's accounts linked back to the same IP address. Armed with this information and with tip-offs from observant members of the public who had noticed Montgomery's car, the police were quickly able to zero in on Montgomery's home address later that day. They found her with a newborn baby she said she had given birth to the day before, but after questioning, her story fell apart and she confessed to her crime.

DOCTORS' NOTES

PSYCHOLOGISTS AND MEDICAL EXPERTS ASKED TO PROVIDE EXHIBITS FOR THE CASE CAME TO SIMILAR CONCLUSIONS: MONTGOMERY WAS NOT OF SOUND MIND

It is my opinion, to a reasonable degree of medical certainty, that Mrs. Montgomery's medical complaints are the result of marked and repetitive head trauma and brain injury. Mrs. Montgomery's brain is compromised not only by traumatic brain injury, but also by psychiatric symptoms for which she was genetically predisposed and which also are known to result from trauma.

A persistent postictal psychotic state is more likely than other theories to offer insight into her behaviour surrounding the offense and during other times in her life when she was unable to mediate her emotions and control her behaviour.

Lisa Marie Montgomery has suffered extreme trauma and degradation throughout her life, first at the hands of her mother, then her step-father, then each of her husbands in turn. Her life has been characterized by extreme physical, sexual and emotional abuse, which compromised her ability to form an identity and to develop as a moral agent.

As the police ramped up the investigation into Montgomery's actions in the days before she murdered Bobbie Jo, a chilling picture of the scope with which she planned the crime emerged. She had worked three jobs at one point – at a petrol station, a Wendy's restaurant and a Greyhound bus contractor. But she had wound down her hours and had stopped working altogether by mid-November 2004, telling her employer at the Wendy's franchise that she was expecting a baby. She had also told her second and current husband, Kevin Montgomery, as well as family and friends that she was pregnant. On the day of the murder, Kevin had picked up his wife and 'their' new baby then driven around their home town, showing off the child. "I had no idea," he later told the press outside the Kansas City courthouse where his wife was charged.

When police began to investigate the files on her computer and her internet history, they discovered that Montgomery had been looking up caesarian sections and birthing kits. She had the means, method and opportunity – not that anyone questioned her guilt by that point. However, some expressed doubts over Montgomery's responsibility for Bobbie Jo's murder.

EVIL INCARNATE

"This is a devil, come back to Earth disguised as Lisa Montgomery," Nodaway County Sheriff Randy Strong told the BBC in an interview shortly before Montgomery's death by lethal injection on 13 January 2021. "I have no remorse for her, it just needs to be done."

Sheriff Strong has as valid a reason for wanting retribution for Bobbie Jo's murder as anyone, second only to the Stinnett family themselves. He worked the case from the very start, interviewing Montgomery when her fragile tissue of lies came apart and she confessed, referring to herself as being a "monster". He was one of the first lawmen at the awful crime scene after Bobbie Jo's mother had discovered her, lying unconscious, in a maelstrom of blood and viscera. Between sobs, Becky Harper described the scene to the 911 dispatcher, as if her daughter's stomach had "exploded". And he'd had to listen to her mother break down. "She's just beside herself," he said. "It's just too much. You're listening to a mother who just found her daughter dead. That anguish... I don't ever want to hear it again."

BELOW Kathy Sage, the owner of a cafe in Melvern, was one of the first people to see the baby after Montgomery brought her in to show her off





ABOVE Bobbie Jo Stinnett's mother, Becky Harper, attends the funeral with family to say farewell to her daughter

What was going on in Montgomery's mind that compelled her to plan such a uniquely terrible attack on another mother? Montgomery's motive wasn't to murder Bobbie Jo, there was no bad blood between them – quite the opposite, in fact. Bobbie Jo had defended her future killer once, after fellow dog breeders had questioned the lineage of Montgomery's puppies. She just wanted Bobbie Jo's baby. Why would she go to such lengths to take the child in utero, risking both the baby's life and being charged with a federal crime, when she could have just planned to abduct Victoria Jo Stinnett after she was born? It makes no sense, from a pragmatic point of view. How could Montgomery have endured the horror of what she was doing, the choking and cutting and ripping over what must have been many minutes? Then leaving the house and Bobbie Jo's butchered body so she could parade her child around her home town in Melvern as if she was her own? And what person in their right mind could think for a second that they would get away with any of this? Skidmore is small and remote but it's not an old Frontier town – it's still modern-day America with digital communications, CCTV, highways and 21st-century policing.

She wasn't a bad person, at least not before damning herself to death row. Before murdering Bobbie Jo, 36-year-old Lisa Marie Montgomery was guilty of no other crime except being born into the wrong family and having a bad lot in life. She was subject to severe emotional, physical and sexual abuse that began when she was still in the womb. Her mother, Judy Shaughnessy, was an alcoholic who drank throughout her pregnancy, leading to foetal alcohol syndrome, a form of irreparable brain damage that affects the child for the rest of their lives. When she was still a little girl, Lisa's father abandoned Judy, Lisa and her older half-

sister, Diane. Judy was the antithesis of what a caring mother should have been. She whipped her children with belts, duct-taped Lisa's mouth shut, and kicked Diane out of their trailer, naked, into the cold Kansas winter. On one occasion, Judy decided to punish her children by beating their dog to death with a shovel. It was a lesson in violence that made an impression on young Lisa, and far worse was to come.

Judy would attend the local bar in Ogden almost every night, often leaving the girls with strange, male babysitters. When Diane was eight and Lisa only four, one of the men raped Diane in the small bedroom the girls shared. She told the BBC that she remembered trying to keep quiet throughout the ordeal, in case Lisa woke up and the man decided he would do something to her, too. Not long after, child protective services picked Diane up and took her to a foster home around 60 miles away in Salina, where her new parents and three foster siblings treated her as if she was a long-lost family member. Lisa, left behind, would never see her sister again, and her nightmare was only just beginning.

Judy married Jack Kleiner, with whom she had at least one thing in common: he was a brutal drunk. Together they had three children, whom Kleiner punched and kicked regularly. After Lisa turned 11, the sexual assaults began. Kleiner built a room on the side of their trailer so he could rape her in relative privacy, while slamming her head into the concrete floor. Judy witnessed one of these assaults, later testifying during divorce proceedings that, "He was in her. He was pumping her." Judy Shaughnessy cared little for her daughter's safety and well-being, though. When Lisa was 15, her mother started to pimp her out, allowing men to rape her in exchange for money and sometimes service, such as the plumbing. "I still can't grasp," said Diane in a BBC interview,



Skidmore, Missouri is a small community with a troubled history

UNRESOLVED

THE MURDER OF BOBBIE JO STINNETT ISN'T THE ONLY HIGH-PROFILE CRIME THAT SKIDMORE HAS BEEN HOST TO IN RECENT YEARS

For a town with such a small population, Skidmore has had more than its fair share of high-profile crimes. Before the murder of Bobbie Jo was the disappearance of her cousin, 20-year-old Branson Perry, in 2001. He has never been found, although police arrested a Missouri minister called Jack Wayne Rogers on child pornography charges in 2003 and discovered records on Rogers' computer that described the rape and murder of Branson.

And 20 years before that came the strange case of Ken McElroy, who was widely considered a town bully of sorts, accused of dozens of crimes including arson, rape, child molestation and burglary, but managed to slip through the prosecution's fingers every time he was indicted. When he shot and injured the town's elderly grocer, Ernest Bowenkamp, and then embarked on a campaign of harassment against everyone sympathetic to the grocer's plight, the town snapped. They'd had enough of McElroy. On 10 July 1981, McElroy left a bar in broad daylight on Skidmore's main street and got into his pickup truck, where he was shot at several times. Two bullets from two rifles found their mark, killing him. There were 46 potential witnesses but no one called an ambulance and no one could identify a gunman apart from McElroy's wife – but no charges were ever pressed.

All images: © Getty Images

“how a mother can say to her child, ‘You have to earn your keep. So you have to have sex with this man, so I can get the plumbing done.’ It went on for years. Years, years, years.”

While some of Montgomery's abuse and mental condition was brought up at the trial, it didn't sway the jury. She was sentenced to death on 22 October 2007. After her conviction, psychologists and experts who examined her concluded that she had an array of serious mental conditions she had been living with for decades, including bipolar disorder, epilepsy and complex post-traumatic stress disorder. Years of sexual torture had forced Montgomery to dissociate from reality, a mental condition that child psychologist Dr. Katherine Porterfield, an expert in trauma resulting from torture, described as “one of the most severe cases of dissociation I've ever seen”. When Montgomery's brain was imaged with an MRI scanner, doctors discovered that it was damaged both structurally and functionally.

According to US law, executing a person with an intellectual disability constitutes a “cruel and unusual punishment” and is a violation of the Eighth Amendment. The prosecution said they found it convenient that these diagnoses, as well as her sister's statements, were only put forward 12 years after Montgomery's conviction. Sheriff Strong simply didn't believe that Montgomery was mentally ill at the time of the murder – he thought it was “an insult to sexual assault survivors to imply that they're ticking time bombs and they're just going to go out and do some horrendous crime. I think that's a cop out.”

Debate about her mental health at the time of the murder still rages to this day. Should she have been found not guilty by reason of insanity? Regardless, it's too late for her now – Lisa Marie Montgomery was executed in January 2021.

RIGHT Zeb Stinnett, Bobbie Jo's husband, attends the Price Funeral Home in Maryville

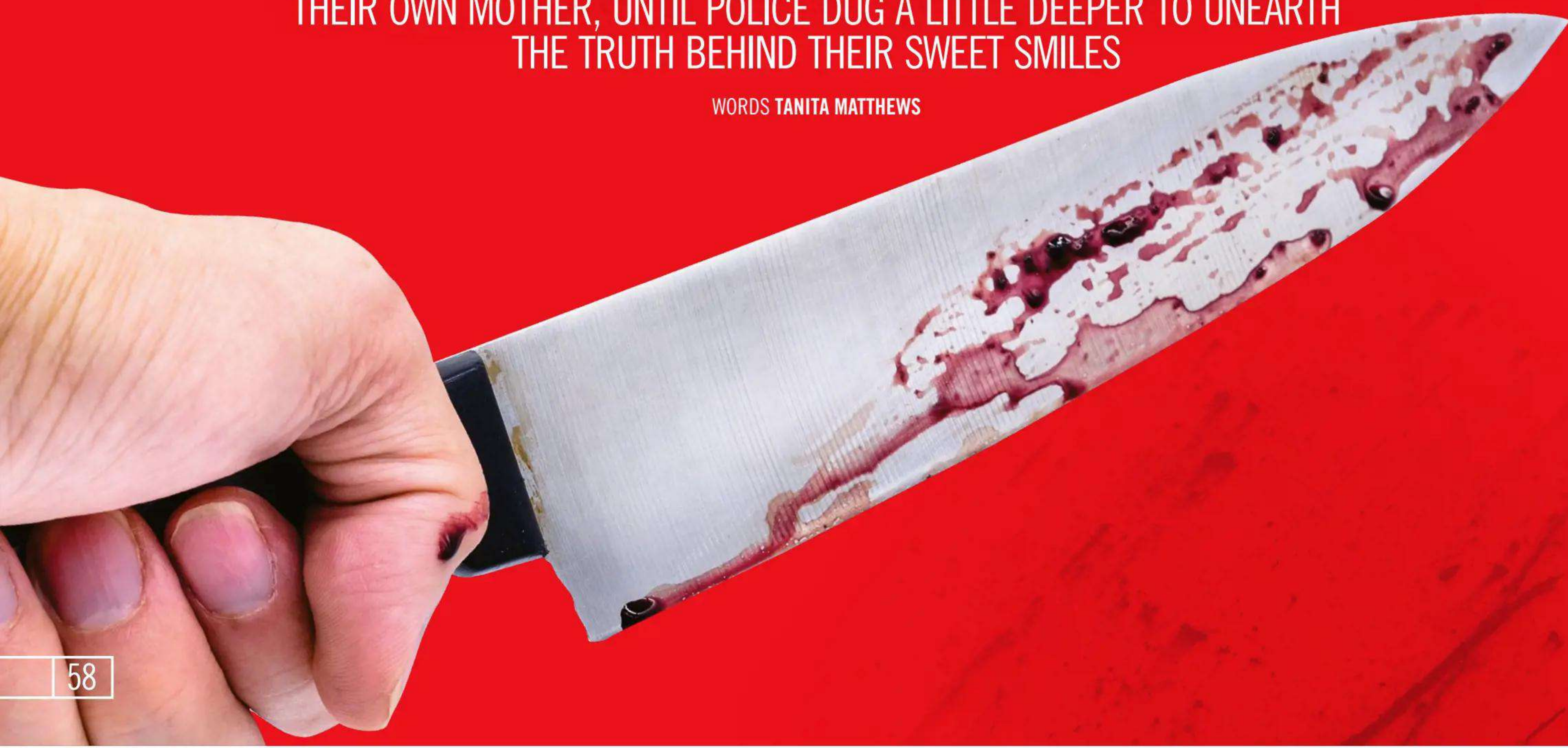


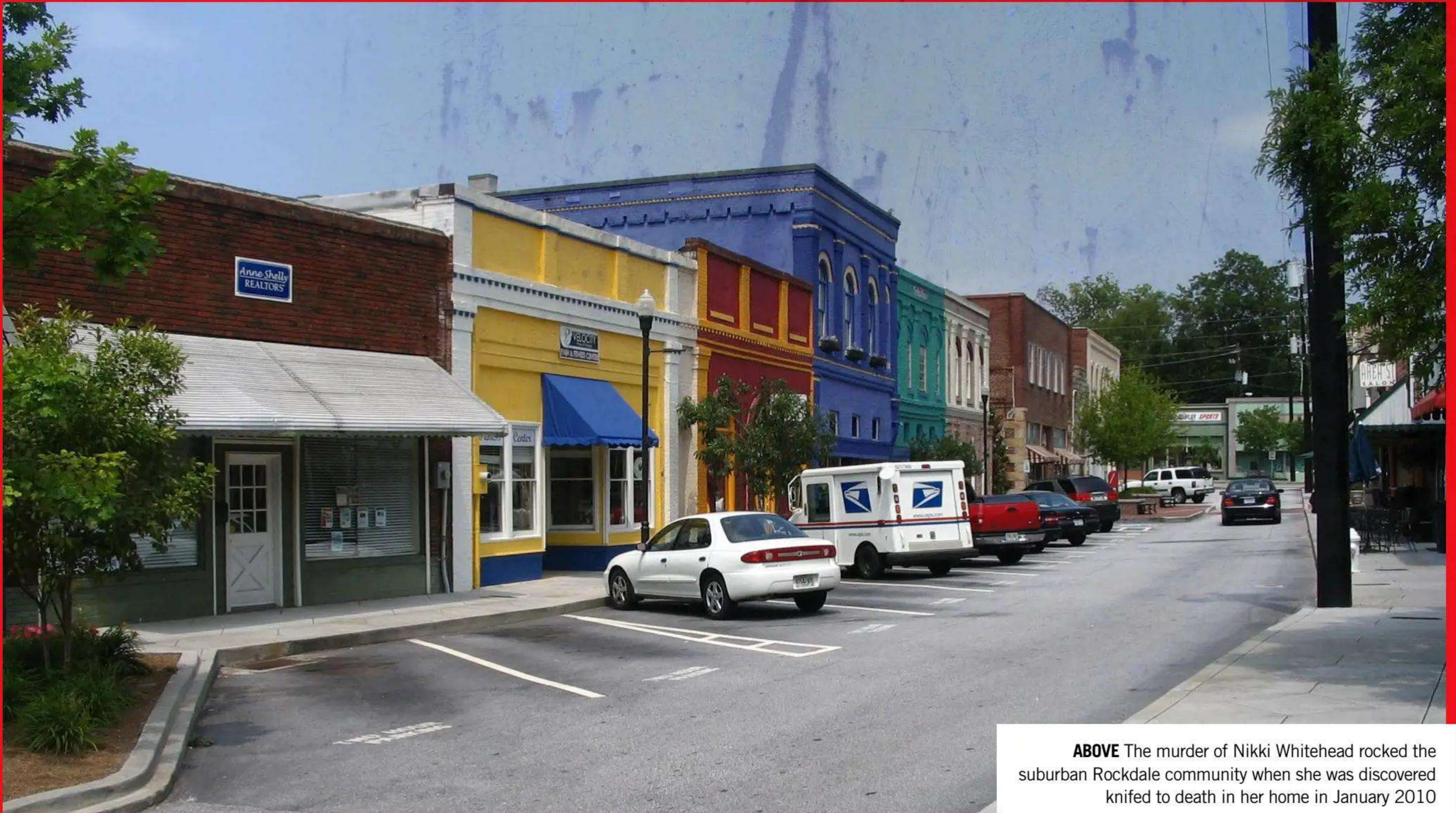


THE GRUESOME TWO SOME

IT WAS INCOMPREHENSIBLE THAT TWO TWINS COULD HAVE KILLED
THEIR OWN MOTHER, UNTIL POLICE DUG A LITTLE DEEPER TO UNEARTH
THE TRUTH BEHIND THEIR SWEET SMILES

WORDS TANITA MATTHEWS





ABOVE The murder of Nikki Whitehead rocked the suburban Rockdale community when she was discovered knifed to death in her home in January 2010

As Rockdale County Detective Ken Swift consoled two sobbing 16-year-old girls inside an interview room in a Georgia police station, his heart sank. The twin sisters before him grasped each other in their arms as they spoke through intermittent sobs. Their mother, they said, had been discovered to have another boyfriend by her live-in lover. The following day they returned to their home in east Georgia to discover she had been brutally murdered.

In his attempt to soothe their distress, Detective Swift asked the girls what he could do to make the situation easier for them. Instead of asking the officer if he could summon a close relative, or arrange for them to be driven to a place they could rest their weary heads, they made a request that made the seasoned officer's hairs stand on their end: "Can we watch *CSI*?"

Their request was as odd as it was chilling – barely hours ago the pair had discovered the woman who gave birth to them savagely killed, and here they were wanting to watch a television drama series about how forensic scientists unravel mysterious murder scenes. Something about the two sweet and innocent-looking girls before him didn't add up.

BAD BLOOD

As a young woman, Nikki Whitehead had been a free-spirited and strong-willed personality. Raised by her grandmother Della Frazier in Clarkstown, Georgia, at the age of 18 Nikki had discovered she was pregnant – what's more, she was expecting twins. On 27 November, 1993, Nikki gave birth to

two identical girls, who she named Tasmiyah (Tas) and Jasmiyah (Jas). Their father was on the scene for a short period but eventually left Nikki to look after the girls alone.

The three of them lived with Nikki's grandmother and grandfather (who died in 2009). Della recalled that Nikki was a sporadic presence in her daughters' lives. In 2000, a wayward Nikki met Robert Head, a truck driver 30 years her senior at a shopping mall, and soon after she went to live with him in the affluent town of Conyers approximately 20 miles away, leaving her daughters in the custody of their great-grandparents. For the first 12 years of their lives, Tas and Jas were sweet and innocent girls, remembered by their great-grandmother as respectful, good and smart girls. But as the twins hit puberty their lives were severely disrupted when their mother opted to have full custody of her children and moved them to Conyers to live with her and Robert.

Living in a new town with a mother they disliked but who now had sole custody over them was a transition that was difficult for the girls to adjust to, as was living with a man who was basically a stranger. The family dynamics shifted.

Almost as soon as they turned teenagers, Jas and Tas began to exude teenage rebellion. Once smart and motivated straight-A students and Girl Scout members, now at the age of 13 the girls' attitudes towards their studies diminished, as did their tolerance of their mother's attempts to keep them on the straight and narrow.

Nikki believed her daughters were sexually active, smoking marijuana and drinking underage.

Her daughters found Nikki's harsh discipline hypocritical, having witnessed her smoking pot and drinking herself. Arguments were frequent in the household, and Nikki struggled to get control over her daughters. As well as the tensions between them, Nikki's relationship with Della was also strained, as Nikki accused Della of interfering with her parenting.

LESS THAN SWEET

One evening, Conyers Police Officer Myra Scruggs responded to a 911 call from a seemingly frightened Nikki following another fallout. The twins told the officer they didn't want to live with their mother anymore. They wanted instead to move back in with their great-grandmother. When the officer left the house she had left the situation much calmer than it had been when she arrived, almost eerily so: the girls seemed to have let the whole argument wash over them.

Within minutes Nikki's screams erupted from the house and officer Scruggs hurried back to the home to find Nikki hysterical. She explained that the girls had attacked her. Conversely, the girls protested and said their mother had been abusive to them. However, scratches on Nikki's neck and chest, compared to the twins's unmarked bodies, showed she had been jumped by her daughters. Both Tas and Jas were arrested and on order of a Juvenile Court judge placed back into the custody of Della. The whole family was ordered to undergo counselling.

Despite their protests that they would be in better hands with their great-grandmother, Tas

RIGHT When being questioned about what they had found when they returned home from school, both Tas and Jas sobbed and rocked back and forth as they described the murder scene



and Jas' behaviour continued to spiral as the girls found themselves in court multiple times. Back in Juvenile Court once again in 2010, they were placed back in the care of their mother for a trial period of two weeks. It was a decision the girls did not approve of. "If I have to go live with you again, I'm going to kill you," Jas threatened her mother. Over the next eight days police were called to Nikki's home on multiple occasions following several reports of major disturbances.

On 13 January, 2010, Rockdale County Police officers patrolling Appaloosa Way (where the family lived) saw a terror-stricken Tas and Jas emerge from the house. Banging on the squad car, the twins delivered some frightening news; they had come home from school to find their mother dead. Entering through the front door, officers were met with stark crimson smears of blood. They were further astounded by the sight that lay in wait in the upstairs bathroom. Inside the porcelain bathtub lay Nikki's brutalised body. Peppered with as many as 80 puncture wounds, the single mother of two had been stabbed in the lungs, jugular and back of the neck. Her spine had been severed.

Side by side Nikki's daughters expressed their belief that their mother had perhaps been the victim of a vicious love triangle between two boyfriends she had been seeing, or maybe she disrupted an intruder in their home.

CRUNCH TIME

Investigations found little evidence to show that the house had been broken into or signs that the lone female had been sexually assaulted, giving no weight to the intruder theory. It was a crime of passion, they concluded, but who hated Nikki so much that they would harm her in such a way? Phone GPS signals and DNA ruled out both of the boyfriends mentioned by Nikki's children. Their biological father's alibi showed he was in Canada at the time of the murder.

Back at the house, a chilling find by detectives was made: a pair of brown boots belonging to one of the twins was marred with blood. Along with that, a clump of hair was found wrapped in a napkin and stuffed into the toe of a shoe. Police questioned both Tas and Jas about their movements the day that their mother had been brutally killed.

The girls explained how they had missed the bus to school that morning and had to walk, leaving the house at around 7.30am. However, surveillance cameras captured the girls hitching a ride from a stranger that morning. CCTV at the school showed the girls arriving at school mid-morning, not ten minutes late as they claimed. After several hours of interrogation, police were forced to release them to the custody of Della.

For four months police looked suspiciously at the twins, and when they reassessed physical

examinations they discovered two bite marks on Tas' arm. Officers recalled how they had observed her biting her arm as she was transported to the station. She had insisted it was a nervous habit, but what forensics instead found was a case clincher. While one set of teeth marks belonged to Tas, the other had belonged to Nikki. Her autopsy results revealed hair between her teeth, and police concluded that Nikki's attacker had been behind her and that the mother had fought back and clamped her teeth down on her assailant's arm, ripping out a small proportion of arm hair – Tas' arm hair. After a turbulent few months it looked as though the twins had reached breaking point and in a particularly bad argument killed their mother.

After months of investigation, officers pounced and arrested the pair on what should have been their last day at high school, fearing that their ceremonial adult status would leave them free to run. The girls faced charges of malicious murder, felony murder and aggravated assault, which according to Georgia state law, meant that the girls, although still juveniles, faced life in prison without parole if they were convicted. Both pleaded not guilty, but after four years of investigations by police, both girls signed a plea deal to avoid a state trial and instead pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter.

In January 2014, Tas was sent before the judge for sentencing. One month later, Jas followed suit. Both girls received 30-year sentences, and they are currently serving their time in separate prisons in Georgia, although judges were not convinced that they had the whole story about what happened inside that family home the fateful day of Nikki's murder.

“ THE SINGLE MOTHER OF TWO HAD BEEN STABBED IN THE LUNGS, JUGULAR AND BACK OF THE NECK. HER SPINE HAD BEEN SEVERED ”

LEFT In the hallway of the courthouse following the judge's decision to place both girls back in the custody of their mother, Jas warned Nikki, "If I have to live with you again, I'll kill you"

ROCKDALE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

"SHE STABBED HER"

WHAT HAPPENED INSIDE THAT QUIANT FAMILY HOME THAT MEANT A YOUNG MOTHER LOST HER LIFE?

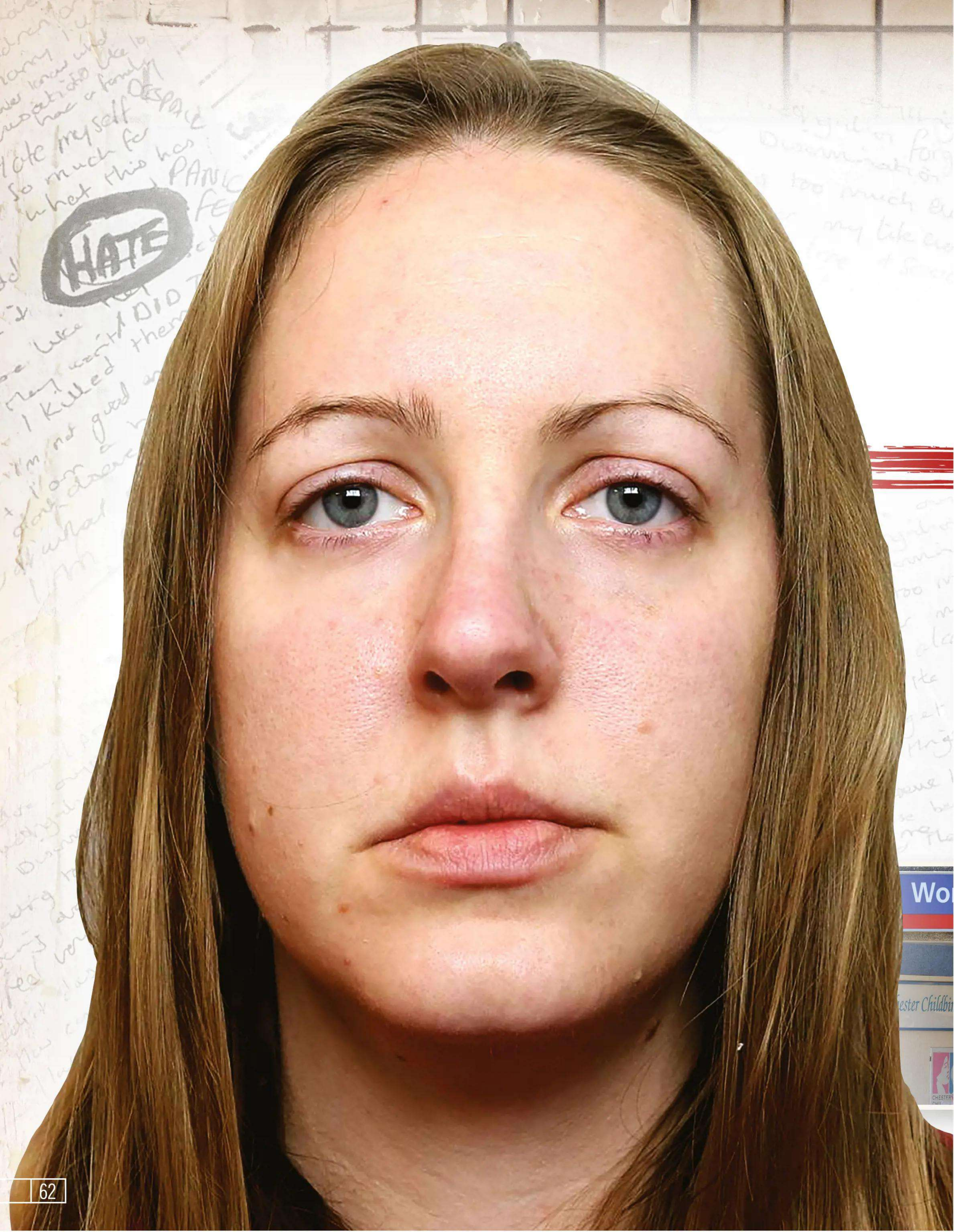
According to Jas and Tas' version of events, their mother had become hostile towards the girls that morning because they were late for school. In anger she allegedly picked up a pot and swung it at them, calling them "whores" and "sluts". As Nikki's anger got worse she reportedly screamed, "We all gonna die today!"

Tas said, "I had took the pot from her, that's when she grabbed the knife and kinda turned and said 'get back'." Jas told the detectives that her mother was "winning that battle with the knife, or whatever, so I pick up the pot and I hit her with the pot," referring to a vase she smashed over her mother's head in the lounge.

Undeterred, she said that her mother then bit her in the chest and refused to release her grip. "Tas stabbed her," Jas told them, a recollection Tas agreed with, insisting the wounds were only meant to stop their mother's attack.

They tried to call a truce, they told detectives, but Nikki continued coming at them with the knife, so they overpowered her and stabbed her. Then they put her in the bathtub filled with warm water because she was complaining she was cold. "Kill me now or I'll kill y'all," she allegedly told them before the life ebbed out of her body.

ABOVE In January 2014, Tas admitted her part in the killing of her mother to a Superior Court judge. As part of a plea deal she was given 30 years behind bars for her confession. Her sister received the same the following month



HATE

Wo

Chester Children's



SERIAL BABY KILLER

SHE WAS ENTRUSTED WITH THE PROTECTION OF THE VULNERABLE BABIES
IN HER CARE, BUT LUCY LETBY REPEATEDLY BETRAYED THAT TRUST.
WHAT DROVE HER TO MURDER SEVEN HELPLESS INFANTS?

WORDS DR JOANNA ELPHICK

Social media photographs show a fun-loving young woman who likes nothing more than a girls' night out, dancing and drinking cocktails, while images of her bedroom, taken by the investigating police officers, suggest a slightly immature girl who still keeps cuddly toys on her bed. But looks can be deceiving: the woman smiling coyly in her graduation photo is the same one who was recently convicted of murdering seven babies and attempting to kill six more, making her the worst child killer in British history.

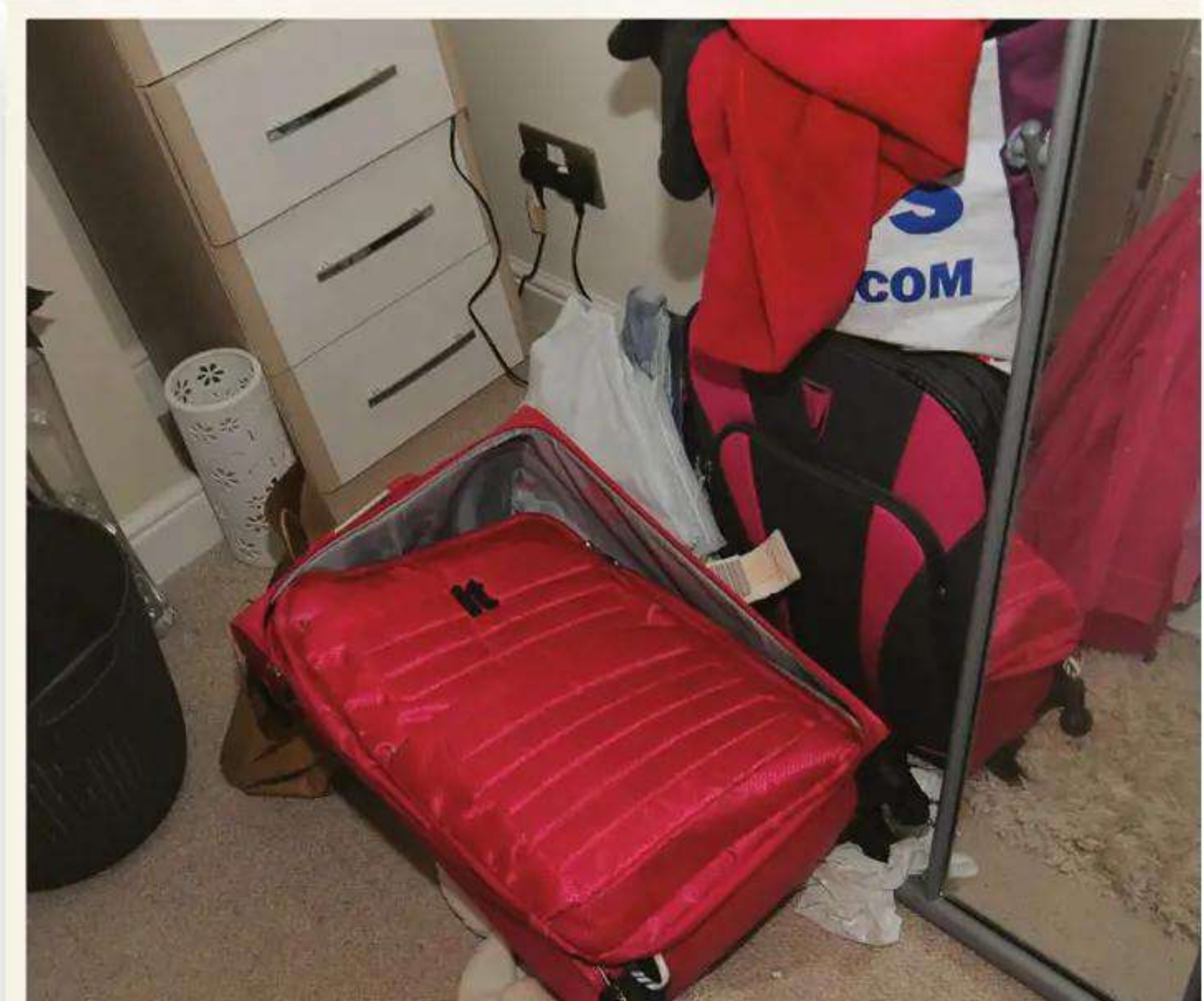
Letby's friends and family are still reeling at the verdict, convinced that the jury of eight women and four men have got it wrong. Her parents, John and Susan, have stood by their daughter despite the overwhelming evidence given by more than 200 witnesses, which included senior consulting paediatricians and her nursing co-workers. Childhood friends have promised to keep in touch, flatly refusing to believe that their pal could be responsible for murdering the babies in her care. But she did. So how did this monstrous creature get away with her vicious attacks, and why wasn't she stopped sooner?



FAR LEFT The building at the Countess of Chester Hospital where Letby worked

LEFT Letby is arrested and taken away in handcuffs at 6am on 3 July 2018, whilst her shocked father waits inside

RIGHT A huge number of confidential hospital records were discovered in bags and suitcases in Letby's house



A KILLER ON THE WARD

Lucy Letby claimed to have always wanted to be a nurse, choosing A levels that would help her achieve her ambition, and it was early on that she decided to specialise in paediatrics, feigning a love of children. She took every opportunity to gain experience working with sick infants and, in September 2011, she finally qualified as a nurse, attaining Band 5 status. Four months later she started working full-time at the Countess of Chester Hospital and by early 2015 she was offered her dream job, working in the neonatal unit. Little did the hospital know that they had introduced a fiend to their team. Shortly after her arrival, the deaths began. Her employers had given her easy access to premature and vulnerable babies, like leaving Dracula in charge of the blood bank, and it was here that desperate parents unwittingly turned to her for help and guidance.

In 2013, before Letby's arrival, two babies died in the Countess of Chester Hospital neonatal unit, followed by three more in 2014. However, shortly after Letby joined the ward in 2015, three babies died and another infant had to be resuscitated, all within the space of two weeks. Baby A died on 8 June, 90 minutes after being handed over to Letby on the nightshift. Baby B, Baby A's twin sister, collapsed the following night but fortunately survived. Babies C and D were not as lucky as Baby B. It was quickly noted that Lucy Letby had been the only nurse to have been on duty at each incident and a meeting was held between neonatal unit manager Eirian Powell, lead paediatrician Dr Stephen Brearey and the Director of Nursing at the time, Alison Kelly. At this stage it appeared to be a tragic coincidence but a quiet warning bell began to ring.

July passed with no major incidents and staff began to relax, assuming that their bout of bad luck was at an end, but by the beginning of August, the unexplained deaths

“ HAVING KILLED BABY O, SHE WAITED NO MORE THAN 13 MINUTES BEFORE MURDERING P. IT WAS HER FIRST DAY BACK AFTER A SUMMER VACATION ”

began again. Twin brothers E and F were born prematurely and kept under observation at the neonatal unit. Letby was working the nightshift again when Baby E died. His mother watched the killer nurse hovering over her newborn, unaware that she had just witnessed the murderer at work. Twin F was attacked the following night and it was at this point Letby should have been stopped. But despite telltale sample results that should have alerted the hospital that something was very wrong, she avoided detection. Luckily for Baby F, the infant was moved to another hospital, closer to his parents' home.

AN UNRELENTING PREDATOR

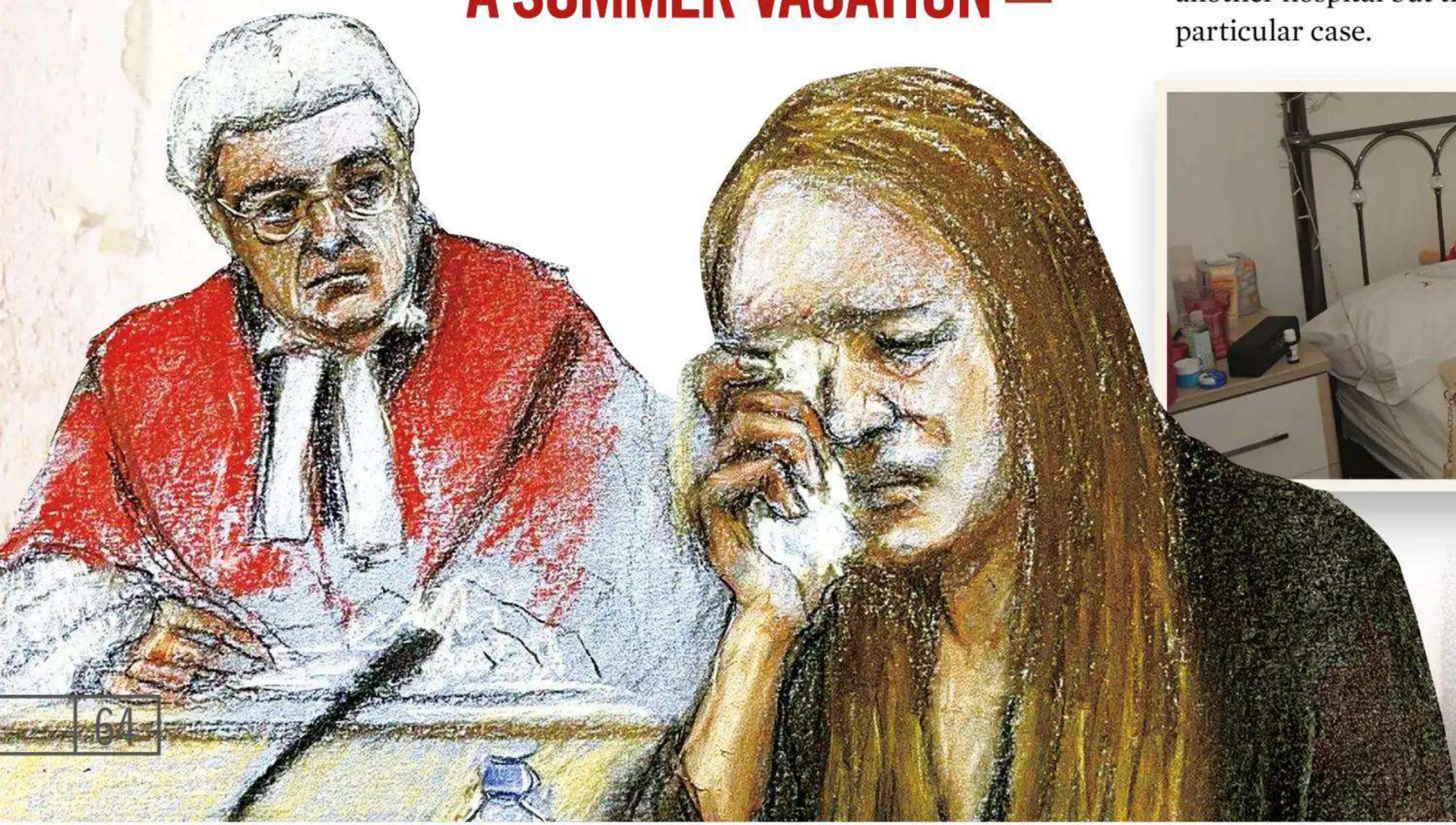
Throughout September 2015, Letby continued her attacks. The parents of tiny Baby G had just celebrated her first 100 days of life with banners strung up in the unit and a cake, shared with the nurses, when Letby attempted to murder the little girl. Having failed to achieve her goal the first time, the evil nurse attacked twice more, causing permanent damage to the infant.

The jury struggled to find Letby guilty of the two attempted murders of Baby H, claiming that records suggested the child had received suboptimal care from the unit as a whole. During the trial the prosecution pointed out that the infant had dramatically improved once she'd been moved to a different hospital, away from Letby, but this was not enough to convince the jury of her guilt.

The death of Baby I in October, on the other hand, was placed firmly at the feet of the killer nurse. When her first attempt to snuff out the life of the premature baby girl failed, Letby tried again and again, finally murdering the infant on her fourth go.

Once again, doctors raised their fears with management but their concerns fell on deaf ears. Baby J died in November of the same year but the jury did not find Letby guilty of her murder. The prosecution pointed out that, up until her death, the baby had been doing well despite a very precarious start and one doctor did suggest that the baby looked as though she had been suffocated, but the case fell through.

As 2015 came to a close, the neonatal unit desperately hoped that 2016 would bring about a fresh start, but the inexplicable incidents continued to take place. Paediatrician Dr Jayaram walked in on Letby as she watched Baby K struggling to breathe. The child died three days later at another hospital but the jury failed to reach a verdict in this particular case.



LEFT Two cuddly toys sit upon an unmade bed, surely the bedroom of any typical young woman. Letby sobs when the image is shown to the jury

"I AM EVIL"

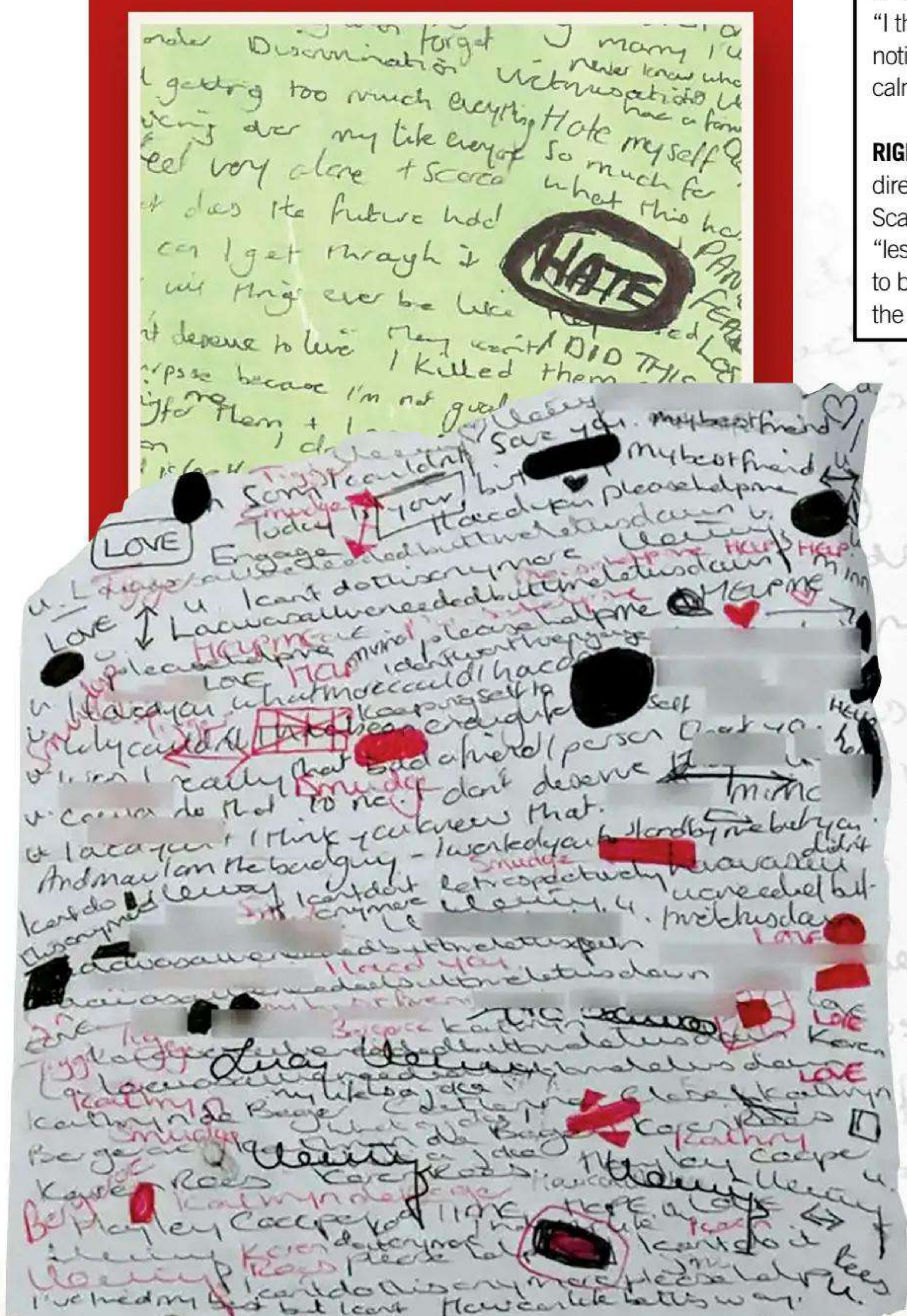
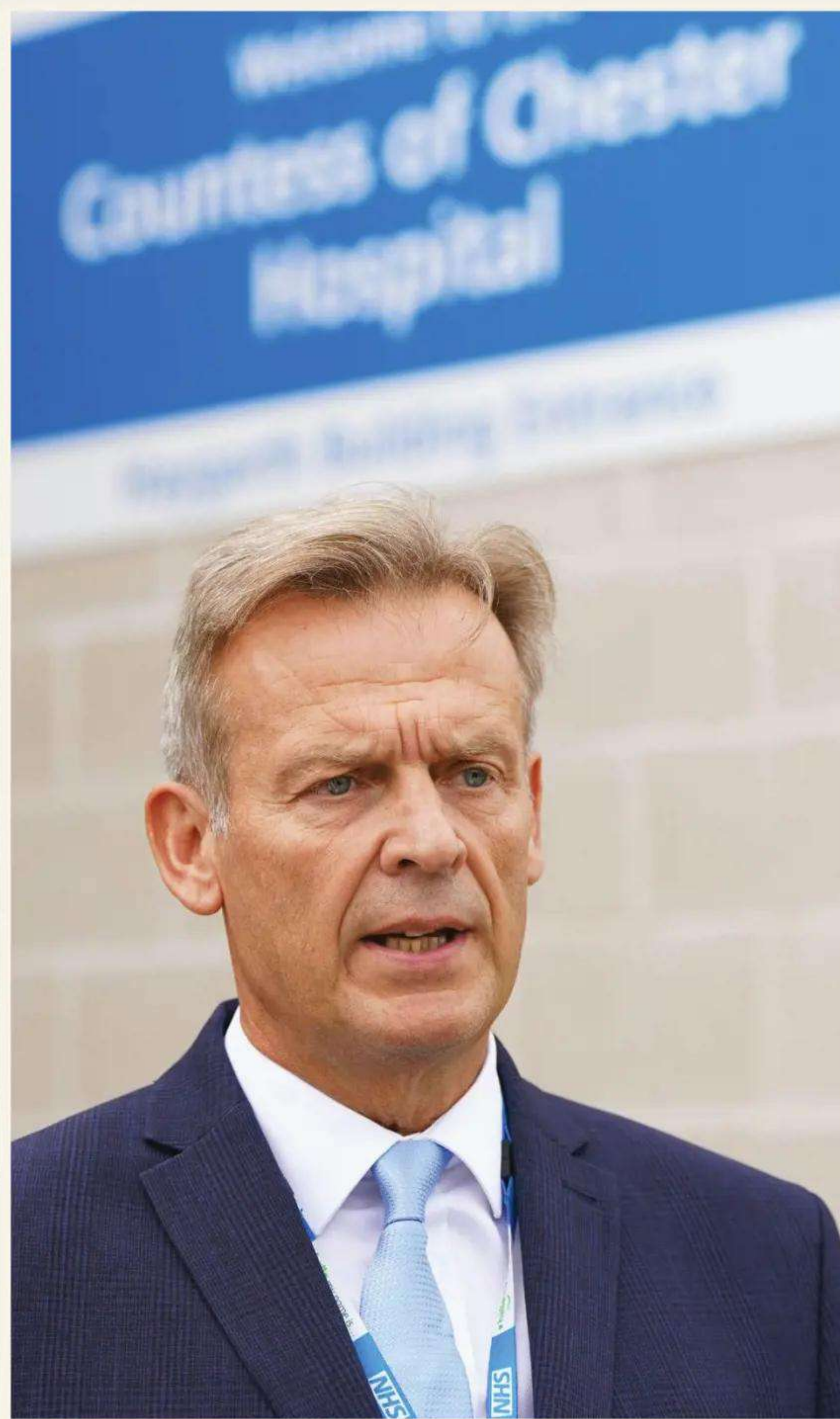
MASSSES OF POST-IT NOTES AND CODED DIARY ENTRIES HELPED POLICE IN THEIR INVESTIGATION

Investigators from the Cheshire County Constabulary discovered the letters, scraps of paper, Post-it Notes and diaries when they searched her home and the bizarre scribbles became a key element of the prosecution's case. The diaries were of particular interest since detectives quickly realised that they contained details of each attack, but the information was hidden within a coded system comprising of coloured asterisks. Various comments such as "I am evil" and "I killed them on purpose because I am not good enough" initially looked like strangely worded confessions and an outpouring of guilt, but criminal psychologist Dr David Holmes doubts that this is likely, stating on *Good Morning Britain* that she was most likely "doodling her thoughts" and merely pondering how this situation affects her rather than feeling any guilt or remorse for her behaviour. Comments such as "How can I get through it" certainly suggest this is the case.



ABOVE Letby during her first police interview. She's quizzed about the inexplicable spike in baby deaths. "I think we'd all noticed," she calmly tells them

RIGHT Medical director Dr Nigel Scawn said "lessons continued to be learnt" from the Letby case



By April 2016, the connection between the disturbing mortality rate and Lucy Letby was undeniable and, since most deaths occurred during the nightshift, it was decided that she should be placed on day duty. Within two days, twin boys L and M had collapsed during the day shift. She was later accused of attempting to murder Baby N three times and ultimately found guilty of one attempt, on 3 June.

Babies O and P were two of a set of healthy, bouncing triplet boys but died at her hands later that same month. Having killed Baby O, she waited no more than 13 minutes before murdering P. It was her first day back after a summer vacation. Letby was accused of attempting to murder one last child, Baby Q, before she was taken off the neonatal ward, but jurors could not reach a verdict on this count.

Mortality rates dropped back to normal as Lucy Letby was redeployed into a clerical role with no patient interface opportunities. The killer was finally off the ward.

MANY MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

There were ten key opportunities to stop Lucy Letby but each plea from staff at the Countess of Chester Hospital fell on deaf ears. Managers were far more concerned with the reputation of the trust, which led senior paediatrician Dr Stephen Brearey to suggest there had been a 'cover-up'. Despite staff repeatedly raising their concerns over Letby, they did everything they could to avoid involving the police. Those working on the neonatal ward had spotted the connection between unexplained incidents and Letby's coinciding shifts as early as June 2015 but the link was initially shrugged off as a horrible coincidence.

At first, Letby's modus operandi was to inject oxygen into the IV tube, causing a fatal air bubble. A number of infants were found to have a blotchy skin rash, indicative of an air injection, but this was ignored. However, when she started poisoning infants with manufactured insulin, alarm bells *really* should have started ringing. Samples were sent away for analysis and the results clearly showed an abnormal spike, but a consultant decided there was no foul play and chose not to investigate further. Meanwhile,

Dr Brearey and Dr Jayaram continued to push for an investigation, eventually instigating an independent review themselves when hospital managers refused. Once again, the fact that Letby was present at each incident was noted.

Eventually, Dr Brearey's demands for a meeting with management were heard but the latter's misguided opinion that there was a lack of evidence meant that the killer nurse was not taken off the ward. In the following month she murdered two of three triplets as well as carrying out at least one other, non-fatal attack before she was finally removed from the neonatal ward and put on office duties. Shockingly, the police were not involved until May 2017, almost a whole year later.

In their desperate bid to avoid unwanted publicity and a negative reputation, the Countess of Chester Hospital has become the scene of one the worst cases of multiple child murders in UK history and the NHS could now face a civil compensation bill of more than £60m from the distraught parents in this case.

At 33, Lucy Letby has been handed 14 whole-life orders, meaning that she will remain in prison for the rest of her days. The judge commented that he could find no mitigating factors to reduce her sentence and that the whole-life tariff was a "just punishment". But what kind of person could contemplate murdering such innocent, vulnerable children?

A MONSTER LIKE NO OTHER

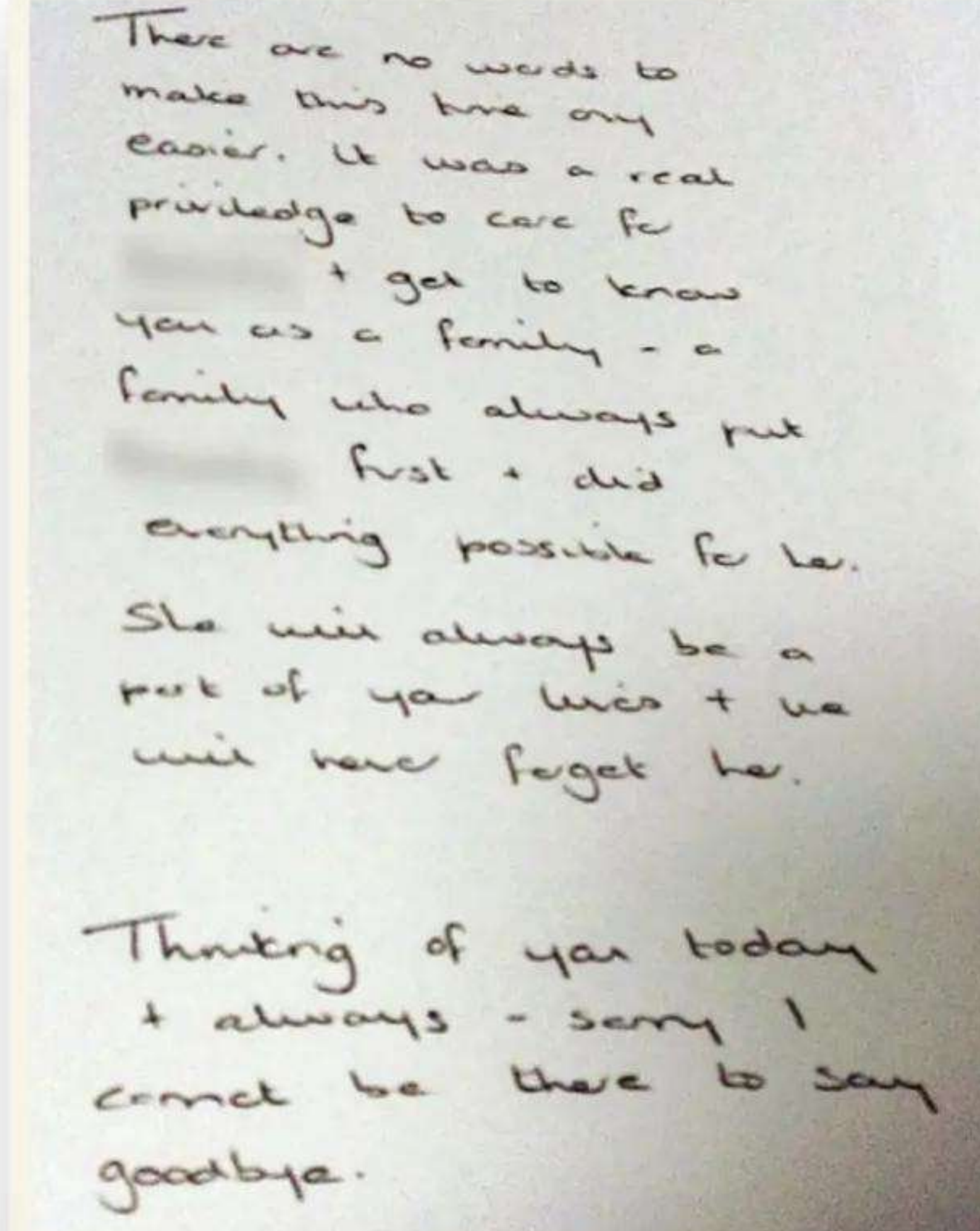
Her acts are utterly unthinkable for the majority of society and, now that the trial is over, psychiatrists and criminal psychologists such as Dr David Holmes and Dr Sohom Das are faced with the challenging task of unravelling the monster that is Lucy Letby. What instigated her pathological desire to kill? What was her fascination with twins and triplets? Can anything explain her actions?

Mr Justice Goss claimed that "there was a malevolence bordering on sadism" in Letby's actions and her total lack of remorse or empathy is clear from her behaviour around each of the attacks. Having attempted to murder twin babies L & M, Letby celebrated a winning bet on the Grand

RIGHT A police evidence tent outside the front of Letby's three-bedroom house in Chester, situated just over a mile from the Countess of Chester Hospital

RIGHT MIDDLE Letby kept a photograph on her phone of the words she had written in a sympathy card sent to grieving parents of a three-month-old baby girl that she had murdered

FAR RIGHT John and Susan Letby arrive outside Manchester Crown Court. Despite the overwhelming evidence, they remain utterly loyal to their daughter and flatly refuse to believe the allegations held against her



INSIDE LUCY LETBY'S MIND

HE'S KNOWN FOR HIS INSIGHTS INTO HIGH-PROFILE CRIMINALS. SO WHAT DOES PSYCHIATRIST DR SOHOM DAS THINK OF LUCY LETBY?

Q: NOBODY SEEMS TO HAVE OFFERED UP A REASON FOR HER BEHAVIOUR. DO YOU BELIEVE SHE HAS MUNCHAUSEN BY PROXY OR IS SHE SIMPLY A SADIST?

A: It is difficult to know Letby's incentives, as she has not opened up her psyche to the world. However, we can look at some of the most high-profile healthcare professionals UK killers and compare and contrast. Beverley Allitt was convicted of murdering four infants, attempting to murder three others, and causing grievous bodily harm to a further six in 1991. She had Munchausen by proxy. This contentious disorder leads the individual to intentionally fake or even artificially create illness. The perpetrator gets some sort of perverse pleasure from feeding off the sympathy and attention that is afforded to the victim. With Harold Shipman, an English doctor, considered to be one of the most prolific serial killers in modern history, there seemed to be a 'god complex'. His thrill was from holding the fragility of death in his hands and the power of deciding who lives and dies.

With Letby, I imagine that there were elements of both of these notorious killers. They were probably other motives, such as power and control or a morbid fascination with the parents' grieving process. It is also possible that she took some perverse pleasure in deceiving parents – being the cause of their baby's death yet also the person who comforts them.

Q: WHAT WARNING SIGNS WOULD YOU EXPECT TO SEE FROM A WOMAN IN HER STATE?

A: For me, as a forensic psychiatrist, Letby is unique compared to the rest of the offender population I have assessed. One major reason is

that there were almost no red flag warnings. She wasn't aggressive, antisocial, hostile or cantankerous. As far as we know, there is no trauma in her history. She wasn't, for example, a victim of abuse. She had no criminal history or even issues relating to friends and peers. In fact, before baby deaths started spiking, she was seen by her colleagues as diligent and conscientious.

Q: THE MEDIA HAS REPEATEDLY MENTIONED THE 'GOD COMPLEX'. COULD YOU EXPLAIN WHAT THIS IS AND DOES IT RELATE TO LETBY?

A: A god complex is a pattern in which an individual believes they have great power or importance, and that they are superior to others. People with a god complex may believe that they are infallible, that they have special powers, or that they are meant to rule or guide others. It's not a formal clinical diagnosis. There are a number of different factors that can contribute to the development of a god complex. These include people who have been praised excessively or given special treatment as children... people with certain personality traits, such as narcissism or entitlement... some mental health disorders, such as narcissistic personality disorder and schizophrenia, can also lead to the development of a god complex. Again, to my bafflement, none of these factors seem to be relevant for Letby. This is one of the reasons I find her so fascinating. If I had the opportunity to assess her myself, I would want to really dig down and see if there is anything from her past that might give us insight into her heinous actions.

BIO | DR SOHOM DAS

CONSULTANT FORENSIC PSYCHIATRIST

As an experienced Forensic Psychiatrist, Dr Sohom Das regularly prepares medico-legal reports on many psychiatric issues for various courts, including the Criminal Court. His 5-star reviewed book, *In Two Minds: Stories Of Murder, Justice And Recovery From A Forensic Psychiatrist*, is available now.



© Alamy, Getty, Cheshire Police



National and also invited friends over for a house-warming party. She also murdered two of three triplets on her first day back after a summer holiday. A chilling text, "probably be back in with a bang, lol", was sent to a friend the day before. Dr Holmes describes Letby as having "a deficiency of humanity" who "creates the disaster" in order to gain a "sense of satisfaction". He also said that she is not a classic psychopath but "certainly rates highly on the psychopathy scale" with many strong psychopathic characteristics. He believes that she was born with these vile traits but as she grew up, she learnt to hide her callousness behind a "façade of normality".

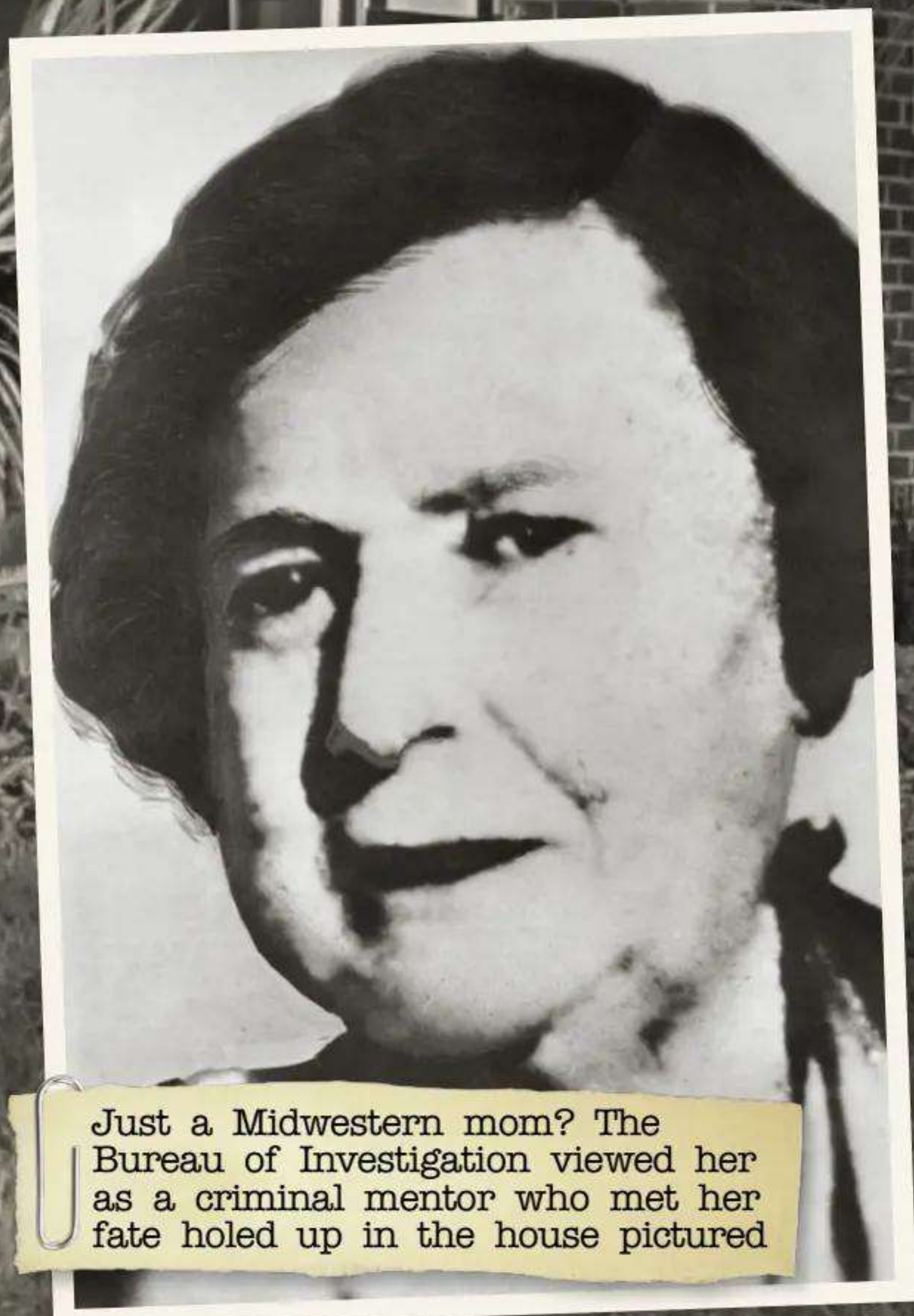
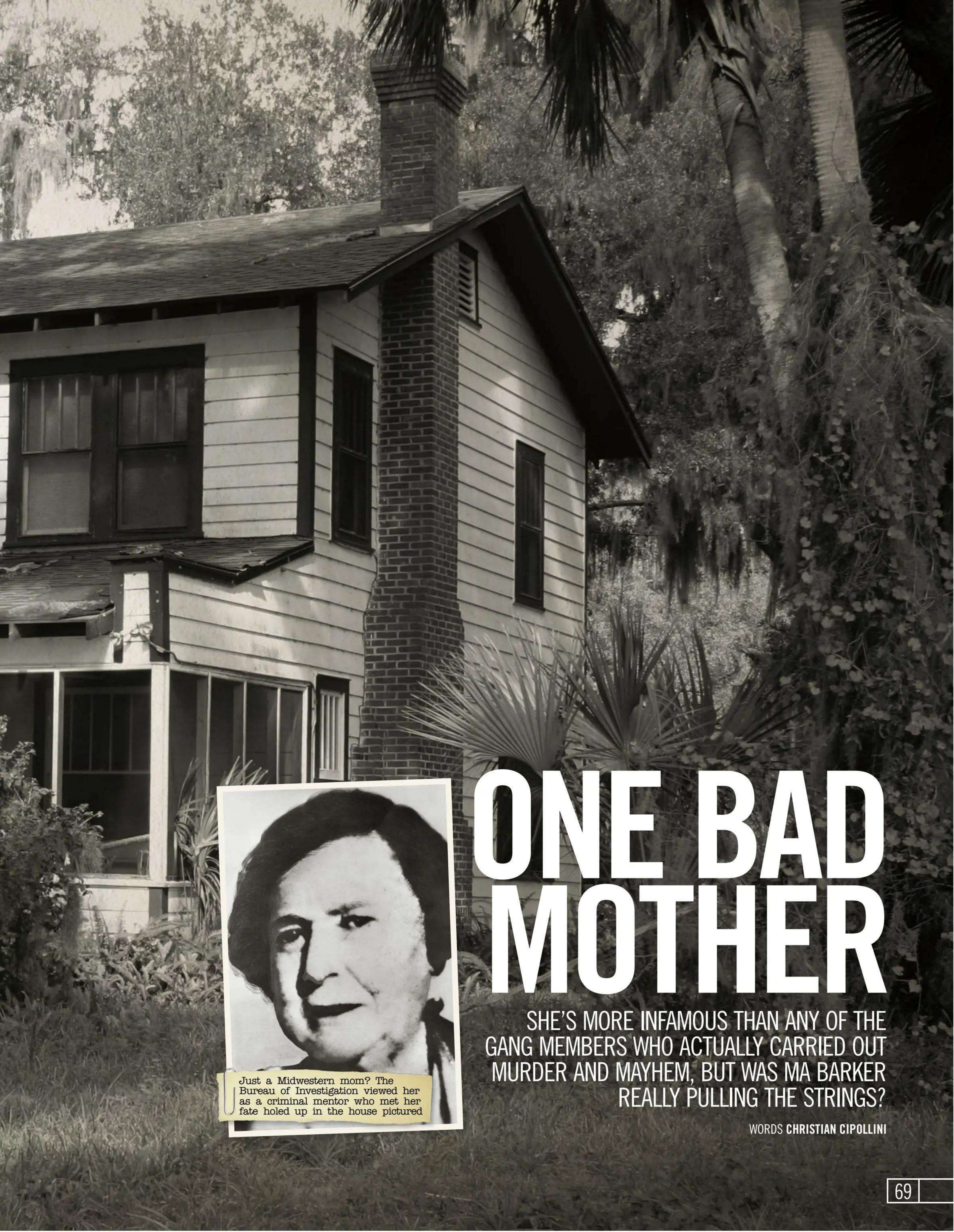
Although there was a total lack of empathy, she maintained a macabre interest in the grieving parents, sending a sympathy card to the mother and father of Baby I, and keeping a close eye on the movements of the parents of babies E and F on social media. She also completed 2,381 online searches of various distraught family members.

Like many serial killers, Letby kept dark souvenirs of her victims. Photographic evidence of sympathy cards and thank-you notes from parents were all found hidden in her bedroom, along with photocopies of medical resuscitation records and blood test results. It is most likely that these memoirs were used to help her 'relive' the final moments of her victims, since these were some of the few times she actually felt anything. Such personalities find it impossible to gain satisfaction and joy from typical life experiences like the birth of a baby.

Letby is an inconceivably cruel woman who will spend the rest of her life behind bars. Meanwhile, experts will probably spend just as long trying to understand what made her this way so that, should another cold, callous creature come along, we might spot them earlier and protect our loved ones from their evil clutches.

As for Lucy Letby, Dr Holmes believes that "she is not a safe person to release". Let us all be grateful that the judge felt the same way.





Just a Midwestern mom? The Bureau of Investigation viewed her as a criminal mentor who met her fate holed up in the house pictured

ONE BAD MOTHER

SHE'S MORE INFAMOUS THAN ANY OF THE GANG MEMBERS WHO ACTUALLY CARRIED OUT MURDER AND MAYHEM, BUT WAS MA BARKER REALLY PULLING THE STRINGS?

WORDS CHRISTIAN CIPOLLINI

Ma Barker left the underworld and entered the netherworld in full-on gangster style – in a hail of furious gunfire. But was her legend, a scathing one at that, more the product of myth than reality? Was a three-legged alligator really the catalyst for Ma's downfall? Did the FBI launch the 61-year-old into infamy simply as a contingency plan to cover potential bad publicity? While the stories the world has been told regarding Ma's role as criminal matriarch and puppet master are gloriously good fodder for movies and campfire tales, the truth is often far less dramatic and, sadly, hinged on ulterior motives.

MY FOUR SONS

The foundation, and in some cases myths, of Ma Barker's gang was built upon the criminality of her four sons and one non-relative. Although there were various other loosely connected members and associates – such as Charles Fitzgerald, Harvey Bailey, Fred Goetz, and others – two of the four boys, Fred and Arthur, plus family friend Alvin 'Creepy' Karpis, were the core of it all (Ma's other sons, Herman and Lloyd, had very little to do with the gang, but had their own lives of crime). How life led them to a criminal family affair was similar, in a broad manner of perception, to the reasons their contemporaries chose such paths.

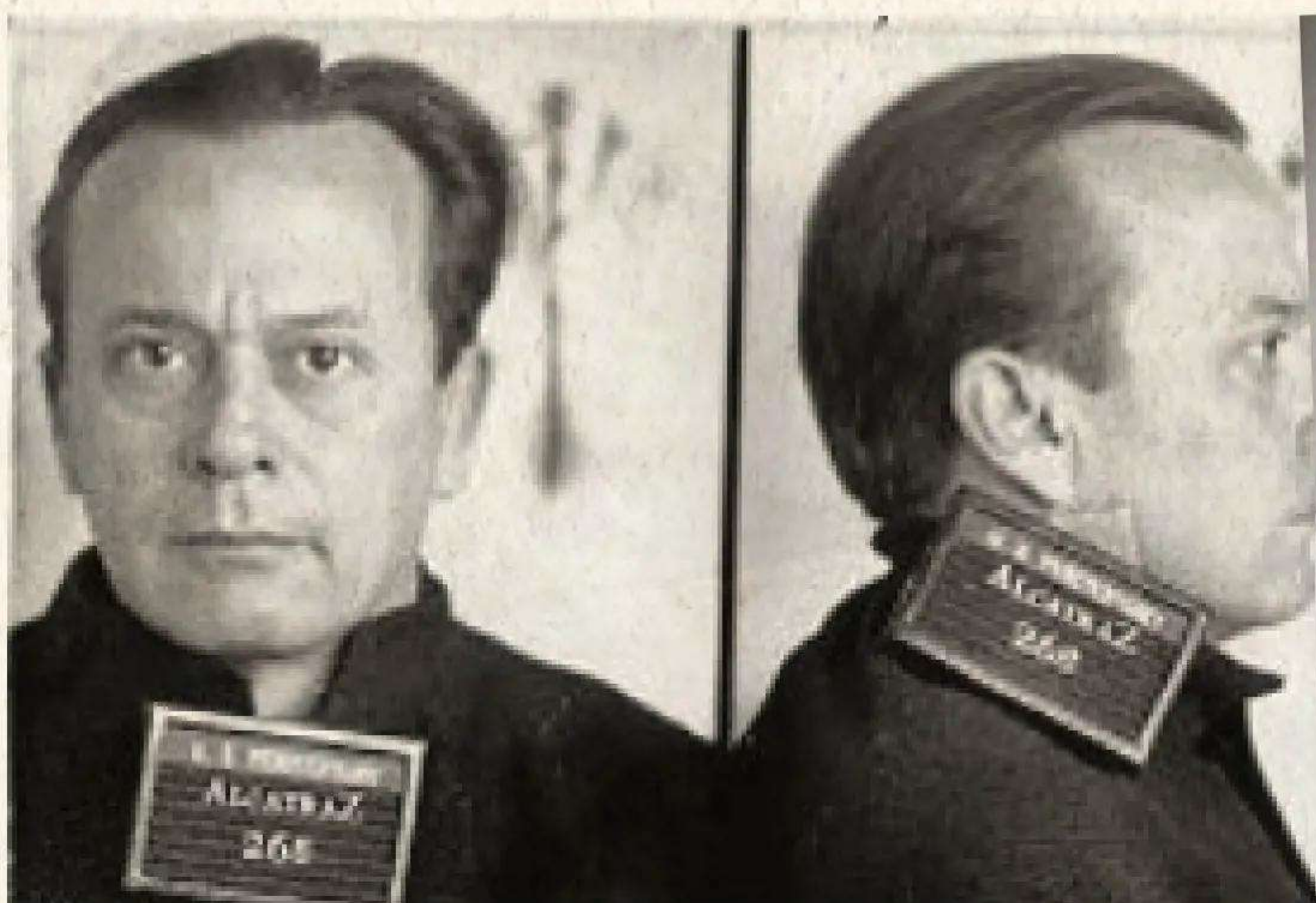
It was the Great Depression, and the entire United States was suffering with economic woes, but the Midwest region began producing individuals and small groups that favoured the art of bank and train robbery, kidnapping and, of course, murder. The Barker-Karpis gang gained notoriety throughout Missouri, Kansas and Arkansas, all the way to Florida. According to government descriptions (basic geographic and demographic profiling), the majority of perpetrators were raised in lower income situations, often in farm country, and characterised as illiterate or close to it – particularly in the case of the Barker brothers.

This rise of the Barkers was described in a file from the FBI in 1936: "The citizens of the southwestern part of the United States had, for a number of years, known and feared many notorious criminals who lived by means outside of the law... outlaws who plundered throughout the States of Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Kansas. Another outlaw band had its origin in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri and Arkansas, and the Cookson Hills of Oklahoma. This was later to be publicized as the notorious Barker-Karpis gang, which, except for its mobility and modern equipment of machine guns and fast automobiles, was made up of typical southwestern bandits. The nucleus of this ruthless band of criminals was the Barkers."

RÉSUMÉ OF MAYHEM

Some refer to the period as the era of the 'Public Enemy'. The criminal subjects were gangsters, in a sense, and the heyday of mayhem ran from approximately 1929 through 1935. More accurately, they were rogue bandits, family units or lone wolves that crossed paths and joined with other lone wolves. Indeed gangs they were, just not in the vein of the entities that dominated the underworld of major American cities during the same time frame.

Most of the well-known Midwestern outlaw factions did not have direct connections (if any connections at all) to the so-called 'mob', but they did develop a remarkable public following. Some of these men and their gangs garnered enough public support to earn folk hero status, with



TOP Fred's older brother Arthur 'Doc' Barker was thought of by most as a thug, and could be relied upon to carry out any violent action called for by the gang's other members

ABOVE Perhaps the most violent of the Barker boys, Fred was also mostly responsible for, along with Alvin Karpis, much of the gang's crime planning

notorious bank robber John Dillinger being a prime example. In the 1930s, FBI boss J Edgar Hoover had not yet admitted that the Mafia or any such 'organised' crime conglomerate existed, and renegade bank robbers, bootleggers and kidnappers (the Barkers, Pretty Boy Floyd, Dillinger and co) became the Federal government's priority.

Now what about those 'other' Barker boys? Well, Ma's sons Lloyd and Herman had actually made the Barker name somewhat newsworthy well before the infamous era that really began in 1931. During the late 1920s, Herman Barker ran with a bunch called the Kimes-Terrill Gang, led by another notorious outlaw named Ray Terrill. In January 1927, the gang engaged in a shootout with police after a Joplin, Missouri, bank robbery, in which Barker took a non-fatal bullet. After a short stay in hospital, Barker was transferred to a jail in Fayetteville, Arkansas. There, he made his swift escape by sawing himself out of his cell. Members of the gang, including Herman, remained on the run until August. Following another robbery, Herman and friends were pursued by police, which led to a gunfight, which led to Herman's last day alive. In an apparent effort to avoid being taken alive, Herman turned the gun on himself.

Lloyd Barker was also a criminal, but never participated in the Barker-Karpis gang's activities because he'd been locked

\$1,200.00

For the M

Mem



Kate "Ma"

Barker

Alvin "C

& Raymond

Occupation v

Fred Ba

Arthur "

brown, Comple

Kate "A

Eyes brown

These ind

Missouri, in

The Chic

each for the ar

officers. This

the crime of M

Police & o

Fugitives.

Jame

Ch

REWARD \$1,200.00

Twelve Hundred Dollars.

WANTED

Order of C. R. Kelly, Sheriff of Howell County, Missouri,
on December 19, 1931

Members of the **Karpis/Barker** gang of Texas,
Oklahoma, Missouri & Kansas



Arthur "Doc" Barker



Fred Barker



Alvin "Creepy" Karpis

"Creepy" Karpis, alias George Dunn, alias R. E. Hamilton, Ray Karpis,
Hadley; Age 22, Height 5' 9", Weight 133 lbs., Hair Brown, Eyes, Blue.
Worked in bakery.

Barker, Age 28, Height 5' 4", Weight 120 lbs, Complexion fair.
"Doc" Barker; Age 25, Height 5' 6", Weight 128 lbs., Hair black, Eyes
Complexion ruddy.

"Ma" Barker, Age 50's, Height 5' 3", Weight 165(est.), Hair dyed black,

Individuals acting together **Murdered** Sheriff C. R. Kelly, West Plains,
"cold blood" when he attempted to arrest them.
Chief of Police and Sheriff at West Plains, Missouri, will pay a reward of \$300.00
arrest and surrender of either of these persons to **Howell County, Missouri**,
jurisdiction holds **Felony Warrants** on all of the above named individuals for
Murder.

Other authorities: Keep this Poster before you at all times as we want these
If further information is needed, Wire Collect Sheriff of West Plains.

S. A. Bridges
Chief of Police

Mrs. C. R. Kelly
Sheriff

The four primary villains of the
Barker-Karpis gang: Ma Barker,
Doc Barker, Fred Barker and Alvin
'Creepy' Karpis

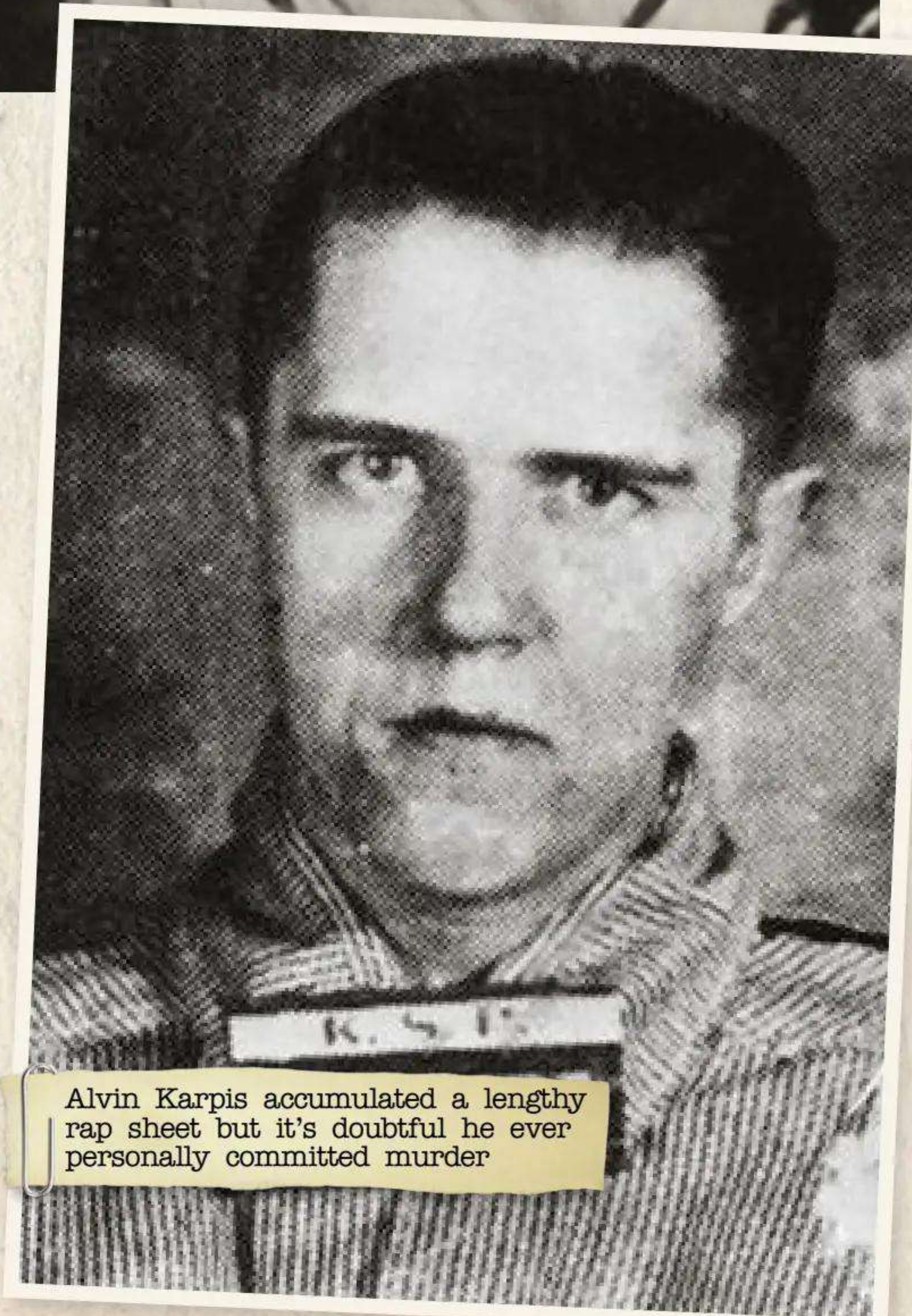
up since 1921, serving a 25-year sentence in Leavenworth
penitentiary for mail robbery. George Barker, Ma's first
husband and father of all four Barker sons, worked a
legitimate job and by most accounts remained present in the
family while the boys were growing up. However, something
happened, the reasons are up for conjecture, and eventually
Ma and George parted ways.

Fred Barker met and befriended Alvin 'Creepy' Karpis in
prison, and by mid-1931, both were out of jail. They re-joined
forces in Thayer, Missouri, where they immediately began
planning robberies and kidnappings together. The first truly
heinous, headline-making instalment of the gang's résumé
occurred in November that year when Fred shot and killed
the town of Pocahton's Marshal Manley Jackson. Fred and
Karpis then robbed a store in West Plains, Missouri, on 18
December, but the following day their car was spotted by
Sheriff CR Kelly. As he approached the vehicle, shots rang
out; the lawman lay dead.

**“ NOTORIETY FROM THE GANG'S ANTICS
BROUGHT FREQUENT MOVES, AND MA BARKER
USUALLY TRAVELLED WITH THEM ”**



ABOVE Ma Barker with her
boyfriend (though some records
indicate husband) George
Anderson, aka Arthur Dunlop



Alvin Karpis accumulated a lengthy
rap sheet but it's doubtful he ever
personally committed murder



RIGHT After Ma's death, J Edgar Hoover, the director of the FBI at the time, called her the, "... most vicious, dangerous and resourceful criminal brain of the last decade"

LEFT Federal agents discovered a large cache of weapons, ammunition and cash inside the Florida house where Fred and Ma were killed

In 1932, Arthur 'Doc' Barker was released from prison and he too joined up with Fred and Alvin. Most accounts of 'Doc' say he was inclined to violence, and his role in the gang was basically that of designated thug, while Fred and Alvin were responsible for all of the criminal choreography. Historically, most of the Barker boys showed no aversion to cold-blooded cop killing, so it's no surprise that they were basically digging a deeper hole for themselves with each violent crime they committed. Notoriety from the gang's antics brought more heat, which required frequent moves from location to location, and Ma Barker usually travelled with them. Also along for the ride came George Anderson, aka Dunlop, Ma's boyfriend. George, however, was a purported drunk with loose lips, not to mention the fact his attitude did not mesh with Fred and Alvin's. George ended up with a bullet to the head in 1932.

The gang continued to fund themselves with robberies, then kidnapping proved to be very lucrative as well. Two big paydays came in 1933 and 1934 with the kidnappings of William Hamm and Edward Bremer. Hamm, famously of Hamm's Brewery, was released in return for \$100,000. Bremer's ransom netted the gang \$200,000. The racket was short lived though, as this was the era of the tragic Lindbergh kidnapping, and the public had zero tolerance for such crimes. Further problems came, and not just from lawmen. Over the next couple of years, some of the gang's associates and former members were killed off by rival gangsters. Those who managed to dodge the bullets of fellow outlaws and the long arm of the law fled the country altogether. Ironically, all

throughout this period of time, and with all the sensational newspaper reports, very little had ever been mentioned about the criminal exploits of Ma.

BLAZE OF GLORY

The breaking point arrived on 8 January 1935, when police caught up with Doc in Chicago. No fight, no fuss; Doc Barker went straight to jail. However, what investigators found in Doc's possession – a somewhat cryptic letter with no identifiable return address – proved to be just the clue necessary to locate Fred Barker. The letter mentioned an alligator affectionately called 'Old Joe'. It didn't take long for agents to pinpoint a general vicinity in Florida where indeed there existed a well-known resident gator named Old Joe. At 5.30am on 16 January, Federal agents surrounded a farmhouse on the shores of Lake Weir, Florida. The occupants refused to come out, and that's when shots rang out. The volley of lead lasted for four hours. It is estimated the agents expended between 1,500 and 2,000 rounds of ammunition during the firefight. In one of the many colourful depictions of how the melee ensued, Ma Barker was credited with kickstarting the gunfight. "The agents heard Ma's raucous voice yell, 'All right, go ahead!' The inspector shouted, 'OK, come on,'" wrote Rex Collier in a 1936 newspaper column. "Immediately, 'Ma' Barker was seen to step to a window and open fire with a machine gun on the inspector, who jumped behind a shed." In reality, that and other depictions like it were blatantly nonsense. More

“ IN ONE OF THE MANY COLOURFUL DEPICTIONS OF HOW THE MELEE ENSUED, MA BARKER WAS CREDITED WITH KICKSTARTING THE GUNFIGHT ”



“LIES! ALL LIES!”

TRUTH BE TOLD, EVEN THE
FEDS ACKNOWLEDGE THE
LEGENDARY STIGMA ATTACHED
TO MA WAS BOGUS

FACTS

Ma Barker died next to her son Fred, but there was no evidence of her having fired, nor was she clutching a gun in death.

Ma Barker protected her sons as a mother would, but not a shred of evidence (beyond a photographic pose holding a Thompson machine gun) demonstrates any criminal plotting or shot calling.

Despite claims of personally arresting Alvin Karpis, J Edgar Hoover did not approach the suspect until a horde of accompanying Federal agents had the situation and suspect well secured.

FICTION

Ma Barker's alleged domineering leadership of the gang also included rules that forbade the gang to have girlfriends.

Ma Barker, bellowing out the window of the Florida hideaway, beckoned the police to engage in a gunfight on the day she died.

J Edgar Hoover physically apprehended the last remaining fugitive of the gang – Alvin Karpis.

evidence points to agents being unaware who or how many people were actually inside the farmhouse. Eventually the shooter, or shooters, holed up inside ceased firing. Agents tossed tear gas into the house, clearing the way for entry. Inside they found Fred Barker and Ma Barker, side by side, dead on an upper bedroom floor. Also recovered from the property was a sizeable cache of weaponry and loose cash.

AFTER THE SMOKE CLEARED

The FBI was faced with quite a conundrum. Notwithstanding the fact that the Barker hideout contained a cache of weapons, and that Fred Barker welcomed a gunfight, there was a problem with the fact they had killed a 61-year-old woman. It could have been a public-relations nightmare for the agency. Soon after the corpses were identified, reports stated Ma's lifeless body was clutching a machine gun. Again, another element of the story likely added for dramatic effect. Hoover immediately villainised Ma in the media, whereas in reality, some believe, she likely would've faced only minor charges had she ever been brought into a courtroom.

Hoover's 1936 book, *Persons In Hiding*, included a great many uncomplimentary adjectives in the section dedicated to Ma Barker's underworld reign, and took particular care in painting her as the 'brain' behind most of the gang's exploits. "Ma Barker was a chief counsel who looked after criminals with the care of a mother for a sick child," he wrote. Adding specific examples, the Bureau chief described Ma's skills in crime scene-escape planning, stating, "Ma also made herself useful in making up 'getaway charts', which enable the robbers to study beforehand every twist and turn of the road, every obstruction they would be likely to meet when they drove away from the scene of a robbery."

Karpis was the last officially recognised 'Public Enemy' remaining. In his memoirs, Karpis explained Ma Barker's role as more of a tagalong, the polar opposite of Hoover's account. "Ma was always somebody in our lives," wrote Karpis. "Love didn't enter into it really. She was somebody we looked after and took with us when we moved city to city, hideout to hideout." Another former gang associate, Harvey Bailey, told *Run The Cat Roads* author LL Edge that, "The old woman couldn't plan breakfast. When we'd sit down to plan a bank job, she'd go in the other room and listen to Amos and Andy or hillbilly music on the radio."

Ma Barker's death didn't mark the end of the story. Strange things were still unfolding. Alvin Karpis remained a fugitive and, compounding the problem for Federal agents in locating the suspect, Karpis had his fingers operated on to remove the prints. Still, the law did eventually catch up with Karpis on 1 May 1936 in New Orleans. The website *Alcatrazhistory.com* notes the Bureau's account of the arrest versus conflicting facts, stating: "The official FBI version states that Hoover reached into the car and grabbed Karpis before he could reach a rifle in the back seat... In fact, the car, a Plymouth coupe, had no back seat. The whole fiasco was further aggravated when Hoover told his men to, '...put the handcuffs on him.' Not one agent had brought handcuffs as federal agents had planned on killing Karpis as they had the other public enemies. Karpis was tied up with the necktie removed from an agent's neck."

Following his arrest, Karpis was locked up in Alcatraz until 1962. In another instance of the ever 'strange but true' anthology of true crime anecdotes, Karpis, who was transferred to McNeil Island Penitentiary, crossed paths with a man who would later become synonymous with the word



'insane': Charles Manson. Other Karpis factoids include that he was the longest serving prisoner in Alcatraz history, and, when he left prison life for good in 1969, he was forced to go back to Canada (where he originally hailed from). By the early 1970s, he had written a couple of memoirs, moved to Spain, where he died on 26 August 1979.

Doc Barker, convicted on kidnapping charges, spent three years in Alcatraz before attempting an escape with three other inmates on 13 January 1939. Guards fired at the escapees, wounding Barker in the legs and head. He died of the wounds shortly after being recaptured. Bad omens continued for the Barker boys. Lloyd, who had been in Leavenworth during the Barker gang heyday, was released in 1947. He settled in Colorado with his wife and kids, and had a legitimate job. Then, in 1949, his wife picked up a 20-gauge shotgun and ended the life of the last Barker son. She told

ABOVE Karpis (right) was arrested in 1930 with fellow outlaw Lawrence De Vol. While incarcerated, Karpis met Fred Barker; the two would reunite outside prison to wreak havoc across the American Midwest

ABOVE RIGHT Like proud hunters displaying a trophy kill, the government loved to showcase slain outlaws, and made sure to circulate image's of Ma's and Fred's bodies

“AGENTS TOSSED TEAR GAS INTO THE HOUSE, CLEARING THE WAY FOR ENTRY. INSIDE THEY FOUND FRED BARKER AND MA BARKER”



police she committed the murder out of fear, but was quickly found to be not of right mind and sent to an insane asylum.

Then there's the alleged treasure. Legends of hidden cash seem to come almost as standard in tales of outlaw aftermath. Ma Barker's story is no different. Knowing of all the spoils of the gang's successful robberies and ransoms, people wanted to know what happened to all that booty. Rumours circulated that Ma buried Mason jars full of cash around the property where she and Fred died, but a more tangible cache of valuables was being fought over in a Missouri legal feud in 1939. George Barker, Ma's first husband and father of the boys, and a man named Frank Dixon were the legal administrators of the late Ma Barker's estate, and felt entitled to a \$24,000 stash of money and diamonds. However, some of that cash was believed stolen from the Citizens National Bank of Fort Scott. The bankers wanted to be awarded all the estate value. Finally, there are of course ghost stories associated with the Lake Weir property where Ma and Fred died. Some say Ma is still there and she isn't always jovial, especially when whispers of the house itself "physically moving" began circulating. In 2016, the land the house sat on was sold for \$750,000 and the house donated to the county.



Hollywood loves a good story and numerous films depicting Ma Barker's exaggerated legend were box office gold



PRELIM

MA

PINE FORCE

STATION

35CM

SURNAME

CARR

160277200802

DATE OF BIRTH

DATE TAKEN

THE MURDER OF HOLLY WELLS & JESSICA CHAPMAN

SHE COVERED FOR A KILLER

MAXINE CARR'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE MURDER OF TWO LITTLE GIRLS LED THE BRITISH PRESS TO DUB HER THE 'NEW MYRA HINDLEY'. BUT WAS SHE JUST ANOTHER VICTIM OF IAN HUNTLEY?

WORDS MARTYN CONTERIO



Jeremy Thompson, the Sky News reporter, likes to say how he tipped off the cops about Maxine Carr's use of the past tense in their now-famous television interview. Yet he began his line of questioning in the past tense. "What were they like?" he asked Carr in a broadcast during the search for the missing ten-year-old girls, Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman. She simply followed his lead. Other journalists too, such as Nathan Yates in his book *Beyond Evil* (2005), noted the use of past tense without seeming to realise Thompson had started off in such a vein. Yet for some, this usage proved beyond a doubt that she knew the girls to be dead and is crucial evidence of her guilt. The cynical British press sought to aggrandise her role to justify continued venomous attacks, which have lasted to this day. Carr (not unlike Myra Hindley) disturbed the moral order and patriarchal views of feminine attributes: that all women are caring, nurturing, and somehow programmed to never hurt a child. Carr told a lie and it destroyed her life. Whatever else she knew about the murders is a minefield of supposition.

Charged and convicted with perverting the course of justice, Maxine Carr was not in Soham the evening her boyfriend, Ian Huntley, killed two ten-year-old girls in what police believe was a fit of rage after a phone call with Carr, whom he suspected of cheating on him. Why did she lie? Did she not cotton on to the fact he'd killed the girls? She knew of his disturbing past as a man serially accused of rape and he'd admitted to 'Max' that Holly and Jessica had been in the house on the night they'd disappeared. Carr effectively battened down the hatches and stood by Huntley through thick and thin, until locked up and forced to confront a truth she possibly knew from the start and may have repressed or genuinely couldn't believe possible.

During the television interview, after talking in general about the girls, who she knew via her job as a teacher's assistant, a position she held from February 2002 to the end of the summer term that year, Carr showed the nation a card Holly had made for her. "She was very, very upset because I didn't get my job and she just gave me this with a poem on the inside saying to a special teaching assistant – really we'll miss her a lot and we'll see her in the future. And that's the kind of girl she was, she was just lovely, really lovely."

Asked for a final line, essentially a plea to the girls or their captor, Carr said: "Just get on the phone and just come home. Or if somebody's got them, just let them go. It doesn't matter where you let them go as long as you just let them go and let them come home."

More so than the brazen murderer Ian Huntley giving interviews, Maxine Carr became the true demonised figure of the Soham murders because of public displays like this. How could she be so cold, so stupid, so intent on maintaining a fiction? It's what she didn't do that ultimately caused the lasting infamy. For Carr provided a false alibi and acted in front of the entire world like she was as mystified as the next person as to what had happened to Holly and Jessica.

A QUIET PLACE IN THE COUNTRY

Hope is a curious thing. We cling to it desperately in times of great pressure and adversity, but hope can also be cruel. In cases of child abduction, those sick with worry face the storm of press conferences and 24/7 media attention. Pleading for information or the safe return of their child, they await any scrap of news about their son or daughter. The mental and physical toll is gigantic. It can last a lifetime and change a

person irrevocably. Then there is the unspoken prospect of a kidnapping turning into a murder investigation. If possible, such black thoughts are warded off by the shining light of hope. It's what keeps parents and relatives from total collapse and despair. That is why hope can be cruel.

The first few hours of any potential abduction are crucial to how the rest of the drama will unfold. Detectives will also begin to twig whether it bears the hallmarks of abduction plus killing. Of course, they cannot tell the parents and media straight out that new factors have come into play, that it's now a potential murder investigation. Reasons for this are ample. Any leaked info, for example, could potentially work in the favour of the killer. If, as Cambridgeshire police suspected, the fiend was among them – even taking part in the search – they couldn't give the game away. It's like playing your hand before the other cards have been dealt. It's best to maintain a poker face, to deploy secretive methods.

As hours turned to days, the disappearance of Holly and Jessica, until the April Jones murder in 2012, sparked the biggest nation-wide search the country had ever seen. Cambridgeshire police were overwhelmed with information from the public. Police were logging 1,800 phone calls a day, at one point. Almost two weeks into the investigation, things kicked into gear proper. Public angst and media coverage, too, threatened to turn against the police. How can two girls just vanish into thin air? Were the police telling townsfolk everything? The sense of frustration across the board was palpable. What had happened to Jessica and Holly?

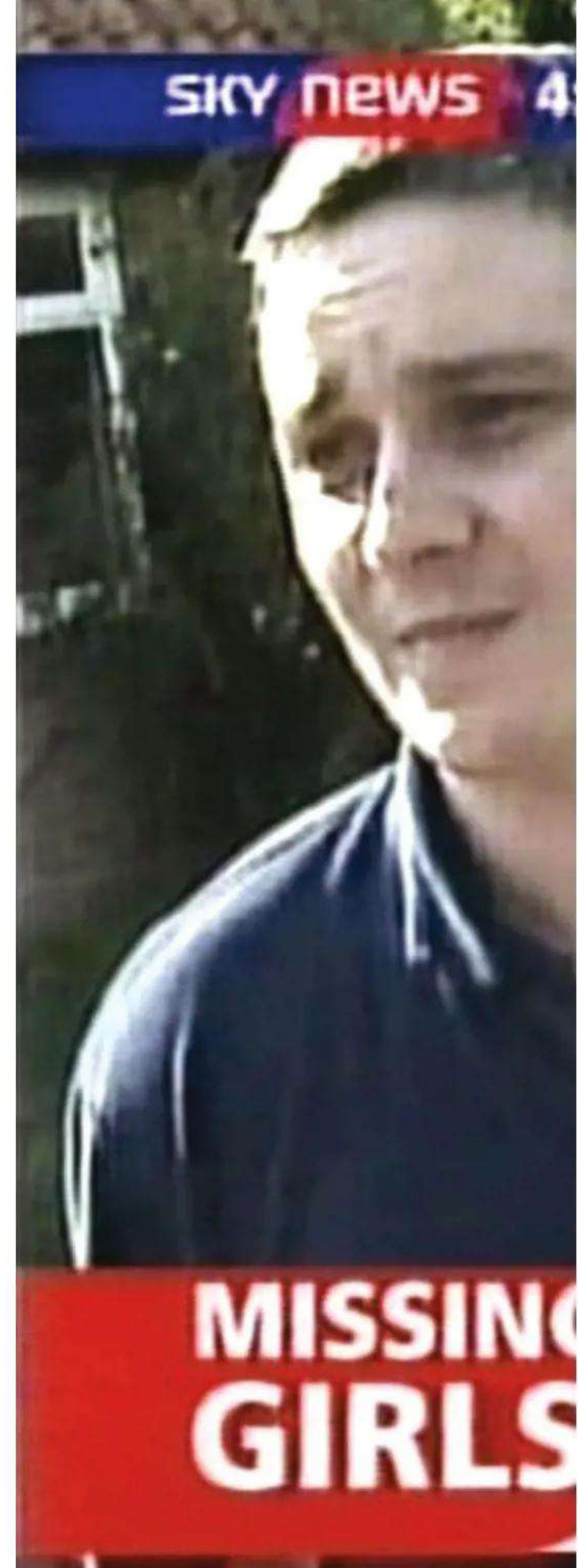
Soham, Cambridgeshire, is home to 8,000 people, and before that late summer of 2002, many had never heard of the place. Why would they? It's a small, village-like little corner of the provinces dotted with military bases and not much in between. An idyllic nook of the country to raise a family, live an entirely ordinary life and where the community spirit and feeling was high. For two girls to vanish without a trace was unthinkable. Bad things didn't happen in Soham, until one day they did.

THE KILLER IN PLAIN SIGHT

"Beggars belief" the young man liked to say to officers, the media and fellow residents. "Beggars belief" almost became this guy's catchphrase. 28-year-old Soham Village College residential caretaker Ian Huntley looked concerned for the safety and return of Holly and Jessica as much as the next worried soul asked for a line to feed the media beast.

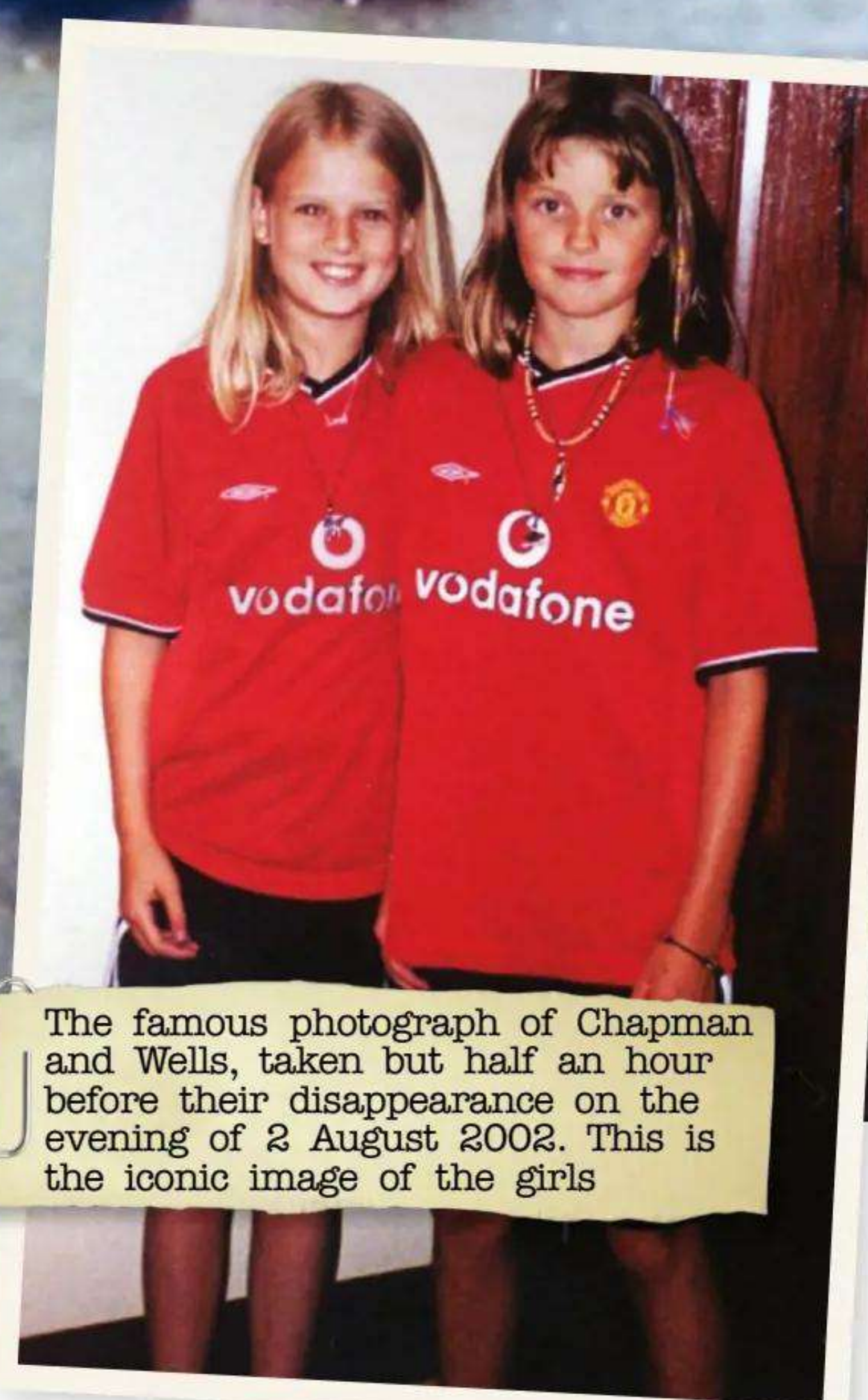
Like an actor who'd received the best training in the world, Huntley supplied the trembling lip and misty-eyed waterworks each time he recounted the moment he saw Holly and Jessica pass his house at 5 College Close. As Huntley brushed Sadie, his dog, the two girls approached and inquired about 'Miss Carr', away visiting her mother up north. The reason the cops failed to zero in on Huntley from the off comes down not just to his plausible shtick, but in those early days he was among a plethora of potential witnesses (police estimated at least 30). While in hindsight we can point the finger and say, "There's something not quite right about that guy," during those frantic days in Soham, he was just a local, a face among the crowd, another citizen

“FOR TWO GIRLS TO VANISH WITHOUT A TRACE WAS UNTHINKABLE. BAD THINGS DIDN'T HAPPEN IN SOHAM, UNTIL ONE DAY THEY DID”



ABOVE Huntley told reporters he must have been the last person to see them alive. Carr, also a face on television, described how lovely the girls were. There was genuine shock when the pair were arrested

RIGHT The girls were captured on CCTV in the car park of Soham's Ross Peers sports centre, where they'd been to buy sweets. This is the last sighting of them alive



The famous photograph of Chapman and Wells, taken but half an hour before their disappearance on the evening of 2 August 2002. This is the iconic image of the girls

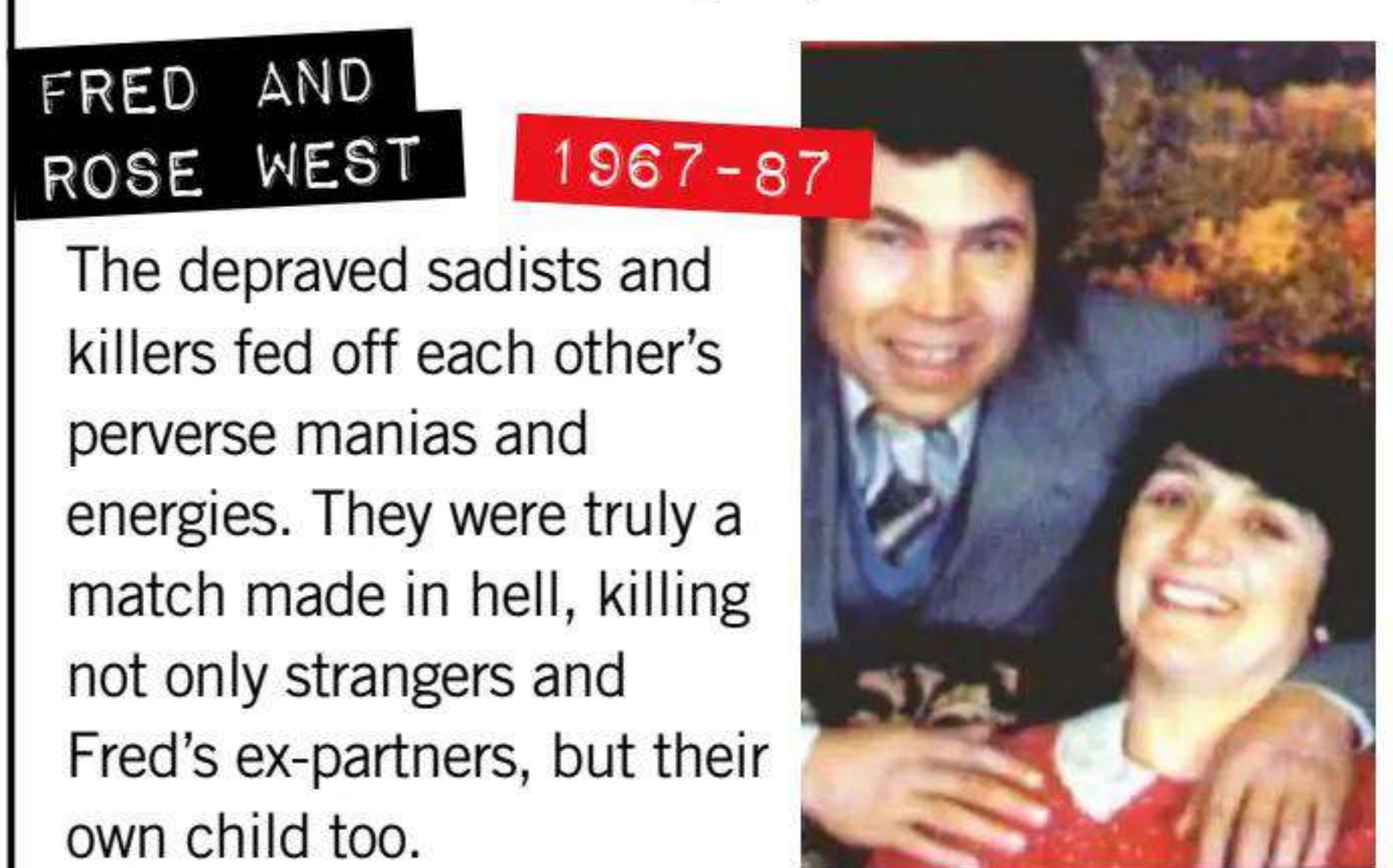
COUPLES THAT KILL

THE FOLIE À DEUX ARCHETYPE IS NOTHING NEW. HOW DO HUNTLEY AND CARR COMPARE TO OTHER INFAMOUS COUPLES IN REAL CRIME HISTORY?



IAN BRADY AND MYRA HINDLEY 1963-65

Brady was the instigator, Hindley the devout follower. Brady, the dominant force in their relationship, did the killing and Hindley attempted to portray herself as a victim. Yet her twisted actions made her an integral part of the murders.



FRED AND ROSE WEST 1967-87

The depraved sadists and killers fed off each other's perverse manias and energies. They were truly a match made in hell, killing not only strangers and Fred's ex-partners, but their own child too.



CHARLES STARKWEATHER AND CARIL ANN FUGATE DEC 1957 TO JAN 1958

The inspiration for many 'lovers on the run' movies, Charles Starkweather was an idiot with a violent temper who believed the whole world was against him. Killing 11 people, Starkweather had a sit down with Old Sparky in 1958. Caril Ann did a 17-year stint in prison.



SARAH BULLOCK AND DARREN STEWART 2006

Said to be under the deviant influence of partner Darren Stewart, teenager Sarah Bullock took part in the torture of a man with severe learning difficulties and made him jump to his death from a 30-metre viaduct near Truro, Cornwall.

dismayed by what was happening. Only when he started showing his face regularly on television did folk in his hometown start to call in and tell them all about the man's disturbing and violent past.

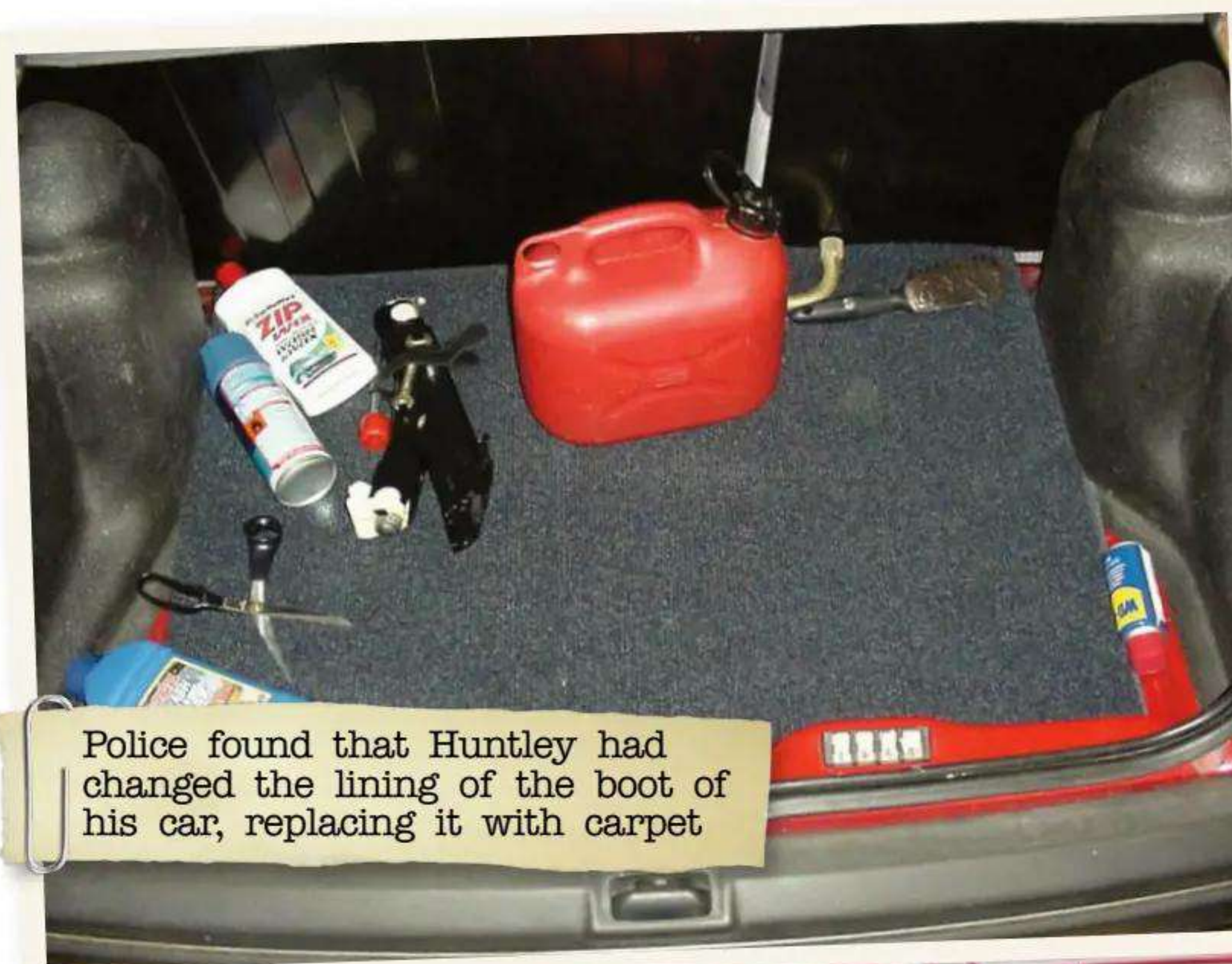
Huntley's accent wasn't the only thing that stood out in this placid part of middle England. The couple living at 5 College Close were friendly enough, but somewhat aloof from the wider community. They'd been in town 11 months, rarely socialised, kept themselves to themselves and generally had little more to say than a passing "hello". Nothing at all out of the ordinary, for some folk are just that way inclined. A desire for privacy is not in any way sinister, after all.

During the search, Huntley came across as a pillar of the community who barely slept. He'd organised searches, let residents and the police search college grounds and spoke on television about the ordeal. It's well known that serial killers will insert themselves into the investigation, usually writing taunting letters or returning to the scene of the crime, reliving their deeds in secret, getting off on the fact everybody around them is standing right next to the very person responsible. Huntley wasn't a serial killer, but he was a serial rapist with an interest in children. And here he was on British television talking about his encounter with the girls, looking ashen and crestfallen, haunted, he said, by the fact he may have been the last one to see them alive.

Many were taken in hook, line and sinker. Reporters largely saw Ian Huntley and his 25-year-old girlfriend, Maxine Carr, also from Lincolnshire, as utterly ordinary individuals, the kind of people you'd least expect to be involved in child murder in a million years. Digging a little deeper, however, revealed warning signs that this couple were not only dysfunctional and in an abusive relationship, but Huntley was a time-bomb waiting to go off. Several times reporters felt uneasy about the pair and reported their misgivings to the police. But it was just another tip or call to log, another avenue to investigate in an operation that threatened to swamp all involved.

It was little things, too. Huntley told conflicting stories about whether he'd seen the girls on the night they'd disappeared. He constantly pestered coppers and journalists for info, or when interviewed at his home, the place reeked of lemon-scented cleaning products, and the dining room – where police believed the murders occurred – was stripped bare and dishevelled. Huntley told anybody who peered in at the room it was being redecorated and given everything that was going on it'd come to a standstill.

Huntley, though increasingly paranoid as the days went by, convinced he was about to be pinched, also thought he'd presented himself as a caring person above reproach. This was a guy with the audacity to approach Holly's dad, Kevin Wells, on several occasions, a man sick with agony and worry, to say how sorry he was for the horror his family and the Chapmans were enduring. There was a point, too, when Huntley thought his act was having the required effect on the police. They'd regularly come by for a chat, always friendly, asking him to go over precisely, again and again, his meeting with the girls at around 6.30pm on Sunday 4 August. Huntley was completely unaware officers had specifically targeted him around Day 10 as a TIE (Trace, Interview, Eliminate) suspect and conducted a forensic search of his home, soon realising the place was spotless. This was strange, but maybe they were obsessive cleaners? A clean home wasn't incontrovertible proof of guilt. But they did find a suspicious dent on the side of the bathtub and they had eyewitness statements – from numerous people – that Carr was in



Police found that Huntley had changed the lining of the boot of his car, replacing it with carpet



ABOVE Huntley used his car to drive the bodies into neighbouring Suffolk, finding a discreet bit of land near a nature reserve and RAF base in which to leave them

Grimsby on the weekend the girls disappeared. Officers were playing nice in attempt to catch a killer. Waiting for a vital clue to turn up or for Huntley to make a wrong move at last, or have enough evidence to swoop in and make the arrest.

THE BODIES DISCOVERED

It's grim business being the one to inform an emotionally exhausted and distraught father and mother their child's body has been found. The glimmer of hope that has so energised them, the speck of faith that the ordeal's end will be happy, with plenty of joyful tears spiked with thunderous anger their child made them so sick with worry, it closes definitively. There is no delicate way of putting it, so the truth is announced with a heavy heart and much professionalism.

On 21 August, two child-sized bodies that had been found on Saturday 17 August, just over the border into Suffolk, near a military base used by the USA, RAF Lakenheath, were identified as the remains of Holly and Jessica. By this time, though, the net around Huntley and Carr was closing in fast. First questioned formally on 16 August, for a total of seven hours, by this time officers were starting to publicly admit to the press and a gripped country awaiting fresh developments this was now – as they'd suspected – a murder case.

“ALONG WITH A VOLATILE TEMPER, WHICH FLARED UP UNDER THE LEAST PROVOCATION, HUNTLEY ENJOYED TORTURING ANIMALS”



Keith Pryer, a gamekeeper who worked on the nearby Wangford Estate, had noticed a pungent stench around a local area known as Common Drove, close to an area where he kept and looked after pheasant pens. The foul, acrid aroma could only be one thing: a dead animal. One morning, determined to locate the source of the stink that had bothered him now for several days, he took along Helen Sawyer and Adrian Lawrence and as they traipsed along a drainage ditch – covering both sides – Mr Lawrence called out, “Do not come any further, Helen, go back to the van.”

What Pryer saw will no doubt haunt him for the rest of his days. Laying in maggot-filled water side by side, neatly, almost respectfully placed, with their hands folded, were the bare, skeletal remains of what appeared to be two dead children. The degradation was severe. Pathologists ultimately identified the girls using DNA. Pieces of the girls’ clothing were found nearby, which Huntley had cut off with scissors in what looked a hurried fashion at the scene, and a path through nettles down to the drainage ditch could be traced. In a final act of savage indignity, Ian Huntley, in a further attempt at removing all traces of his involvement, had returned on 7 August and attempted to set fire to the bodies.

BEFORE SOHAM

What signs are there in Huntley’s childhood that the boy would one day grow up to be a child murderer? Born in 1974 in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, Ian Huntley was like millions of others: a working-class lad from a solidly working-class town in the east of England. But a tough upbringing nor chaotic

INSET The burned remains of Man United FC replica shirts were discovered on Soham College grounds, and hairs belonging to Huntley were found on the shirts

ABOVE The net began to close on Huntley and Carr two weeks after the disappearances. They were questioned by police and later both arrested on suspicion of murder

family dynamics explain fully his future actions. Plenty of kids are dragged up in the school of hard knocks by parents striving to get by. But there are signs.

Huntley was bullied at school and something of a mummy’s boy with a borderline hatred for his father. This loathing would cool in later years (it was Ian’s father who told him about the job in Soham) but there was a great deal of resentment for a very long time. Ian grew up also having it in for his younger brother, Wayne, not least when Huntley’s first wife, a teenage bride, left him for Wayne and later married. This bad blood between siblings never properly healed and Ian, in a suicide note found while he languished in HMP Woodhill, in June 2003, awaiting trial, forbade Wayne from attending the potential funeral.

In his mid-teens, Huntley decided to turn the tables on those who’d wronged him – the kids who’d nicknamed him ‘Spacehead’ (because of his large forehead) and began to target kids younger than him. This desire to avenge and humiliate led to unhealthy places. Along with a volatile temper, which flared up under the least provocation, Huntley enjoyed torturing animals too – a theme so common in nearly all cases of serial murder and crime that the FBI, when developing their pioneering techniques of profiling, included it along with pyromania and bedwetting past the point it was socially acceptable as what they called the ‘homicide triad’. Ian’s temper is believed by police to have led directly to the murders of Holly and Jessica, which occurred only minutes after a massive row over the phone with his girlfriend.

Those who went to school with Huntley recall a chronic attention-seeker and pathological liar. This lying became a



Huntley initially claimed he had accidentally knocked Holly in to the bath when she was in the bathroom, which is when she drowned



The house where Huntley and Carr lived, and where Holly and Jessica were killed, was provided as part of Ian's job with the school

HOW IT HAPPENED

HUNTLEY'S VERSION OF EVENTS THAT EVENING IS A PACK OF LIES, BUT POLICE ALSO BELIEVED THERE TO BE A KERNEL OF TRUTH TO SOME PARTS OF IT. HUNTLEY, AFTER HIS CONVICTION, BEGAN TO INSIST IN PHONE CALLS TO HIS MOTHER THAT MAXINE CARR KNEW ALL ABOUT THE MURDERS EARLY ON

HUNTLEY STRIKES


Huntley sees the girls walking towards the house and entices them in, perhaps using Carr as bait. She is away visiting family, but Chapman and Wells don't know this.

GIRLS MISLED


Huntley leads them into the dining room, and police speculated that he may have told them Carr was upstairs feeling unwell.

HOLLY DROWNED

Their killer is not a big guy, but the ten-year-olds would have stood little chance when he decided to attack them. He claimed in court Holly drowned in the bath and Jessica was smothered.



The bodies of Chapman and Wells were transported to their dumping site in the boot of Huntley's car. They were stripped and set on fire

The Manchester United tops that the girls were wearing when they went missing were found burned in a bin

Huntley and Carr's house (bottom right) was fenced off so children didn't have to look at it as they went to Soham Village College (centre)

JESSICA STRANGLED

Huntley told his mother he'd murdered Jessica by strangulation when she discovered Holly had been killed in the bathroom. She had tried to telephone her mum, in a panic.

A KILLER'S REASONING

Huntley explained: "I was telling her to stop shouting so I could think. She kept saying, 'You pushed her. You pushed her.' It was only when I put my hand on her shoulder as she went for the door that I realised I couldn't let her leave the house."

BODIES DUMPED

The killer wraps the bodies in bin bags and drives 27 kilometres to a secluded spot close to RAF Lakenheath. Huntley, an avid plane spotter, knows the area well as his grandmother also lives in the village of Lakenheath.

CONFESSION TO CARR

Huntley telephones Carr on Monday 3 August and tells her that he's killed Holly and Jessica and he needs her help. Carr was later adamant that she knew nothing about the murders. He drives up to Grimsby and brings her home to Soham.

CARR'S INVOLVEMENT

In Huntley's new scenario: Carr not only learned of the killings early on, she actually took an active part in the covering up of the crime, not just providing an alibi for Ian. Did she dictate the bodies should be burned and help clean the house?



“THE COVERAGE AND PUBLIC FEELING WAS SO INTENSE, THE MEDIA-STOKED VENOM SO UNRELENTING, THAT JUDGES ORDERED SHE RECEIVE LIFE-LONG ANONYMITY”

ABOVE Maxine Carr in Holloway prison, North London. In the eyes of the press and public, she became a hated figure. The cheap Myra Hindley comparison, however, bears zero weight or scrutiny

RIGHT The crowd baying for blood outside court. During the trial, Carr referred to her former boyfriend as “that thing”



common thread through his life. He liked to tell anybody that would listen how he was forced to leave the RAF because he suffered from asthma, or that he'd won the lottery and was moving abroad. On two occasions, he attempted suicide in his youth. But most striking of all was an interest in young girls.

Huntley became known to Lincolnshire police as a man accused of rape on four separate occasions during 1998, but the charges never stuck, even after he was officially charged with one of them, which occurred on waste ground near a nightclub, where Huntley had effectively stalked his victim all night. Part of the reason he was successful in getting the job at Soham Village College was that his record had been wiped due to lack of convictions. But the allegations were so frequent that they would be a major cause of embarrassment after events in Soham. Not only that, the documenting of sex offenders and the sharing of information between police forces country-wide altered significantly. That it came at such a devastating cost is but one part of this case's tragedy.

By the late 1990s, Huntley had his brand of vicious domination and control down to an art. He'd come across as a nice guy until he'd slept with a girl. After this, girlfriends became his emotional and physical punching bags. He'd run their lives or harass them until, for reasons only known to him, he'd give up and latch on to the next vulnerable target. A sordid life bedding vulnerable teenagers and drifting from menial factory job to menial factory job, Huntley developed a self-pitying persona – the whole world was against him – and all he wanted was to be loved and settled down, he'd gripe to his mum. That's when Maxine Carr walked into his life.

THE WOMAN WHO LIED

Raised in a single-parent family almost as if an only child, for her older sister was ten years ahead in age, Maxine Carr was a shy and body-conscious girl who fluctuated in weight dramatically. A chubby kid, she suffered from anorexia as a teenager. Believed by many to be supremely introverted unless she'd been tickling booze, she came across as nervous and perhaps overly ambitious. It was her dream to become a teacher and she loved spending time with kids.

Hailing from the same part of the world as Huntley, there is an incredible irony to their relationship. While often violent, abusive and domineering, their union represented a kind of stability. Meeting one night in the Hollywood Bar nightclub in Grimsby, a tacky drinking establishment, the pair hooked up and moved around the area frequently, living in one-bedroom flats and bedsits, Huntley telling his new girlfriend a sob story about how he constantly felt persecuted by everybody for all the claims made against him. Carr, for reasons known only to her, fell for the sob story; she actively took part in protecting them both come hell or high water.

The move to Soham looked like a fresh start with excellent prospects. But even as early as this move down south, they were lying. Carr faked exam results on her CV to get a teacher's assistant position at St Andrew's Primary School, attended by Holly and Jessica. Huntley – a serial rapist with a penchant for teenage girls – was employed under a three-month trial period initially, as the new caretaker at Soham Village College, despite having no experience of the role. Yet in those first months, with accommodation provided, Huntley was viewed by the school as a diligent and trustworthy worker, who worked hard and not once stepped out of line or drew suspicion. It's telling, however, that pupils interviewed by the media in the aftermath of the murders told conflicting stories. The boys

hated him and thought he acted creepy around the girls, while the female pupils seem to have engaged with him in a totally different way. Huntley technically had no criminal record because Humberside police had deleted his file due to lack of convictions. The school did their background checks, but nothing was flagged.

THE NEW MYRA HINDLEY?

As Maxine Carr walked along the corridor to her cell at Holloway Prison, shouts rang out. 'Myra Hindley mark two!' While all united as felons, miscreants and law-breakers, in the hermetically sealed kingdom of the jailhouse, with all its unique rules and rituals, doing porridge for crimes related to child murder makes said person the lowest of the low and the target for revenge and attacks.

The press had a field day with anything relating to Carr. Even in 2016, it sought to whip up indignation and frenzy with updates on her life post-release, acting with cynically primed outrage at the fact she'd settled down, married, bought a nice wedding dress for the big day, had a child and tried to get on with life as best she can. The coverage and public feeling was so intense, the media-stoked venom so unrelenting, that judges ordered she receive life-long anonymity, police protection and a ban on newspapers reporting her exact location and whereabouts. Yet the howling headlines refused to let the world move on. The whipping up of mob fury has led to innocent women who bear a slight resemblance to Carr being hounded and assaulted. Was she living in Northern Ireland, Scotland or somewhere on the English coast? Tabloids portrayed Carr's life since as a cake walk, not one of constantly living in fear.

On the other side of the debate, columnists with their own agenda presented Carr as a total and utter victim of Huntley's. They softened her role to that of a complete dupe, a patsy, making out her involvement was a minor thing, as if she was living in fear of her partner's moods and didn't quite grasp the seriousness of the situation. She had ample chances to shop him and didn't. Carr should have twigged – and maybe she did – when arriving home to discover Huntley, a man who hadn't cleaned his home or ever done the dishes in all the time she'd known him – had scrubbed the house top to bottom, the carpet in the dining room was wet through and the place looked spick and span. Not just that, but the conversations they'd had over the phone, on the drive back. Then came the claim she was an obsessive cleaner, which might well be true. But Huntley most certainly was not. He told her the girls had been in the house and how he was scared because his past would make the cops think he'd done something, or would pin it on him. These are strange words and ideas – certainly enough for anybody's alarm bells to start ringing. Because this is out of the ordinary, not routine, there is a distinct lack of logic. It was as if he was attempting to confess but in the most roundabout way imaginable.

"Stand by your man," as Tammy Wynette sang. A worthy concept, for sure, when it doesn't involve murder. But Carr did just that and doomed herself. It couldn't be proven in a court of law that she had knowledge of the murders before their joint arrest and charges (Carr's alibi initially meant she too was charged with murder). But that doesn't solve the matter, or give us a definitive answer. Maxine Carr's limited – but crucial – involvement certainly does not warrant the 'Myra Hindley II' or 'the vilest woman in Britain' tags, but only she knows deep down what she knew and what she didn't. Her burden, her shame, will remain a private hell.



QUEENS

OF THE

DOWN-UNDERWORLD

EACH BACKED BY A MEAN BAND OF RAZOR-WIELDING WARRIORS AND A HANDFUL OF SLY WHORES, CRIMINAL MASTERMINDS TILLY DEVINE AND KATE LEIGH BATTLED IT OUT TO BE SYDNEY'S GANGLAND OVERLADY

WORDS TANITA MATTHEWS

Between the early 1920s and the outbreak of World War II, the east Sydney suburbs of Darlinghurst, Kings Cross, Woolloomooloo and Paddington, gripped by prohibition, were the backdrops for a vicious gang war. Vagrants and vagabonds ruled the streets with glinting razors for weapons in light of strict gun laws, devoted to the biggest names and rivals in New South Wales: Tilly Devine and Kate Leigh.

Fearless women in a man's world, they aspired to be not only more brutal and powerful than their male rivals, but also the fiercest female of the inner Sydney area, appropriately dubbed 'Razorhurst'. From brothels on Palmers Street to sly grog shops in Surry Hills, from the Battle of Blood Alley to a shootout at Maroubra, Tilly and Kate headed forces made up of some of the most villainous men and women in Australian history. Collectively, they painted the city red with the blood of their enemies, smearing Sydney with a streak of violence and vice that would take decades to wash away.



The prohibition era gave rise to the 'six o'clock swill', the term used for the drunkards who would stumble from pubs at 6pm closing time, having drank as much as they could, before heading to (usually) one of Kate's sly grog shops



“‘SEVEN YEARS FOR STICKIN’ TO A MAN,’ KATE HAD SPAT AFTER HEARING HER FATE. ‘I’LL SWING BEFORE I STICK TO ANOTHER’”

ABOVE Surry Hills was Kate Leigh's stomping ground, where she was dubbed 'The sly grog queen'. It was a slum inhabited by vagrants and vagabonds during the 20s and 30s, when the razor gangs ruled the streets

‘LONG JOHN SILVER OF SYDNEY’

Unlike her rival, Kate was a true-born Australian. Brought into the world in a Dubbo shanty in New South Wales on 10 March 1881, Kathleen Mary Josephine Beahan was a wilful and cheeky child. The daughter of impoverished cobbler and horse trainer Timothy Beahan and his wife Charlotte, she had 12 siblings and was the naughtiest of the lot. Her father's frequent thrashings were a meek deterrent for the girl who would rack up 107 criminal convictions in her lifetime. At the age of ten she ran away from home and was housed at Parramatta Girls Home, a reputable dumping ground for uncontrollable girls. After four years she was released from the home and dabbled in waitressing and factory work in Sydney's Surry Hills.

Sydneysider and author Larry Writer painted a different picture of the cosmopolitan Australian city from the Sydney of today, with its charming cocktail bars and golden beaches. In his book *Razor: A True Story Of Slashers, Gangsters, Prostitutes And Sly Grog*, Writer noted how in the "early years of the twentieth century, all day drinking and narcotics use, street prostitution, handgun ownership, off race course betting and gambling were either legal or tolerated in New South Wales". This was the world Kate knew and grew up in. Provocative and sexually promiscuous, she was a good-

looking young woman: slender and small in stature, her thick wavy hair and enchanting dark eyes attracted many a young man in the smoky sanctuaries where she kept the company of Australia's down-and-out personalities. At the age of 21 she married her first husband, 30-year-old petty criminal Jack Leigh. The pair had a daughter, who they called Eileen.

Wedding vows typically promise that spouses shall stick together for better or worse, and Kate certainly stuck by her man when times were hard. When Jack was arrested for attacking and robbing their landlord, Kate insisted to the judge that her husband had come home to find his blushing bride in bed with the proprietor – the destitute housewife had been presented with no other choice but to pay for their humble home by way of sexual favours. The court, unconvinced by her story, sentenced Jack to jail time at Darlinghurst Gaol. For her attempts to corrupt the court and being an accomplice to the attack, Kate was also given a jail term, and they both served five years behind bars.

When she and Jack were released they parted ways, and Kate found herself thrust into a society downtrodden by prohibition. The Vagrancy (Amendment) Act of 1905, the Gaming and Betting Act of 1906 and The Police Offences (Amendment) Act of 1908 had made prostitution, gambling and the sale of cocaine illegal, all of which had been widely enjoyed by the masses but now had been driven underground. Attempting to make an honest living for herself and her young daughter, Kate went back to factory work, but low pay and long hours soon left her uninterested in a legal living. She supplemented her earnings working as a madam and part-time prostitute. By 1913 her earnings were all illegal. She was convicted for maintaining a house frequented by prostitutes and placed on a 12-month good behaviour bond. But just as the threat of a lashing from her father did little to deter young Kate, the threat of gaol was also futile.

SYDNEY'S SAVAGE SOLDIERS

WITH BATTLELINES DRAWN BETWEEN TILLY DEVINE AND KATE LEIGH, THEY RELIED HEAVILY ON THEIR LOYAL AND BRUTAL ARMIES TO FIGHT PITCHED STREET BATTLES AND KEEP THEIR RIVALS AT BAY



TILLY DEVINE

◆ 'Big Jim' Devine

Also her husband, he was Tilly's protector, chauffeur and 'getaway' man. He also had his own criminal enterprise selling cocaine to Tilly's 'girls'

◆ Frank 'the Little Gunman' Green

Small in stature, Frank Green was a psychopath used by Tilly to protect her brothels. A drunkard with a cocaine addiction, he also had a violent temper and would stop at nothing to prevail against his opponents

◆ Sid McDonald

Known to police as a "very violent man" he was the bodyguard of Tilly and her husband Jim and lived with the couple in their Maroubra home



KATE LEIGH

◆ Gregory 'the Gunman' Gaffney

A gun for hire, he was Kate's soldier. He shot Frank Green on 17 July 1929. As a result, the Maroubra shootout occurred and Gregory Gaffney was shot dead when besieging the Devine home

◆ Bernard 'Barney' Dalton

An Australian pioneer, rugby player and gangland figure, he was killed by Tilly's man Frank Green

◆ Wally Tomlinson

He was shot during the murder of Bernard Dalton and named the shooters as Jim Devine and Frank Green to police, making him a target for Tilly's men

◆ Bruce Higgs

A baby-faced chauffeur and errand boy for Kate, it was said that she had a crush on him. He was attacked by Tilly's men and left with slashes above his eyes, on his forehead and each cheek, as well as his on his hands and arms



The 1914 Eveleigh Heist saw Samuel 'Jewey' Freeman, Kate's lover and leader of the notorious Riley Street Gang, sent down for carrying out "the robbery that shocked the nation". As well as committing the offence in broad daylight, it was the first reported robbery involving a (stolen) car for a getaway vehicle. Jewey and Ernest Alexander Ryan 'Shiner' had robbed the paymaster for the NSW Railway and his junior at the factory complex on 10 June and made off with £3,002 (£2 million today). Jewey, Shiner and Norman Twiss – an Everleigh worker and suspected inside man – were arrested and sent to trial at the Central Criminal Court in Darlinghurst. Jewey insisted he had been in bed with his lover on the day of the heist, an alibi Kate not only backed up but embellished. However, discrepancies saw them both

sentenced to lengthy jail terms inside Long Bay Gaol. "Seven years for stickin' to a man," Kate had spat after hearing her fate. "I'll swing before I stick to another."

She served less than five years of her sentence before she was released. World War I was over and Sydney had changed. For a start, 6pm closing times had been implemented on pubs under the 1916 Liquor Act, which had left a huge gap in the market for thirsty Australians. Kate saw the opportunity and set up a 'sly grog' shop in Surry Hills, selling overpriced alcohol to punters after legal closing times were over.

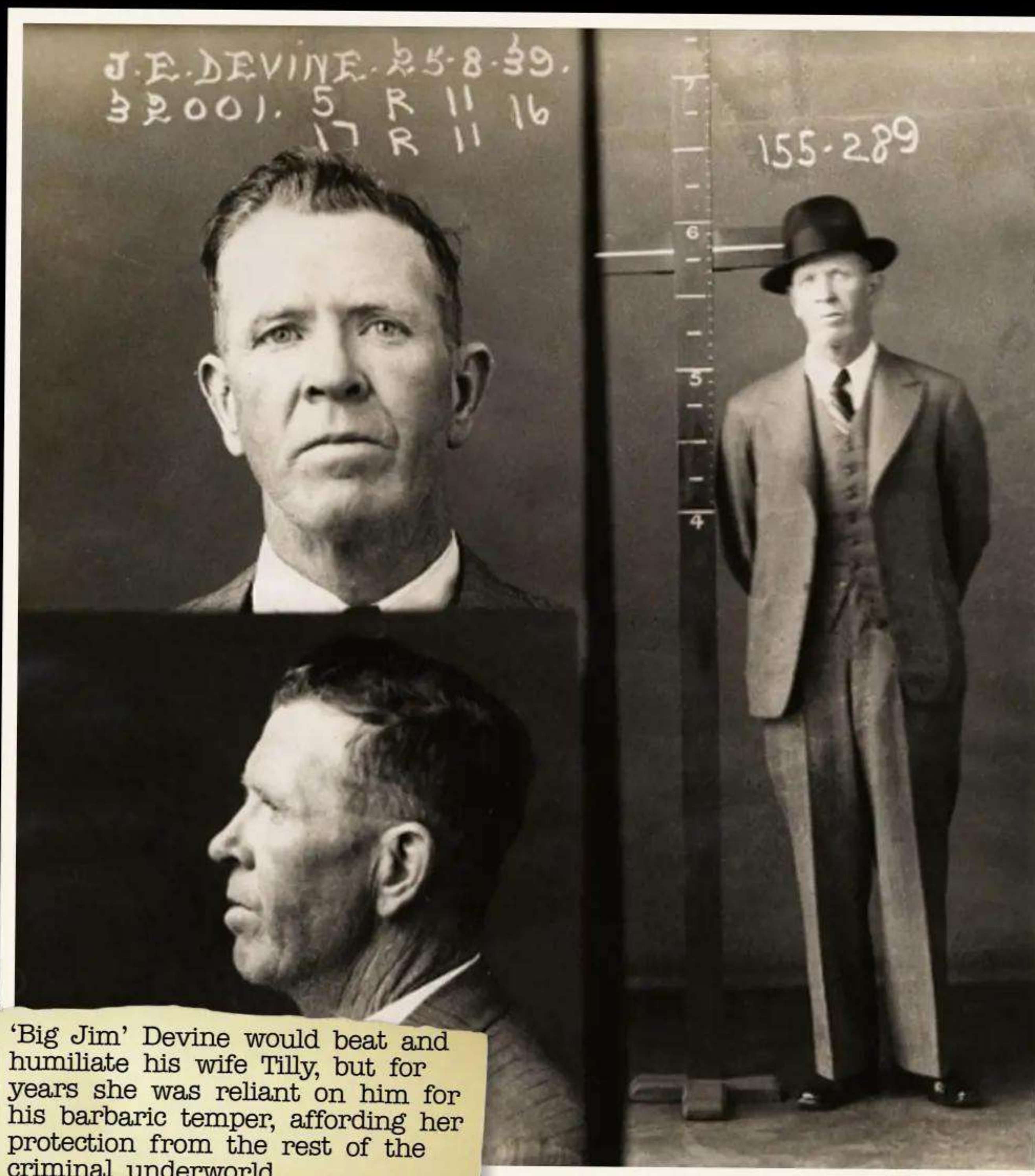
Kate had barely been a year out of the gaols when her soon-to-be arch enemy stepped off the war-bride ship Waimana, which had docked barely three kilometres away at Circular Quay.

“WHEN THE HANDGUN WAS OUTLAWED UNDER THE 1927 PISTOL LICENSING ACT, VIOLENT OFFENDERS ADOPTED A NEW WEAPON OF CHOICE: THE RAZOR”

PRETTY TILLY IN THE BIG CITY

Across the waters, in England's capital city, London, Kate's rival was born in a Camberwell slum on 8 September 1900. She was named Matilda Mary Twiss by her parents Edward and Alice. She starved and shivered her way through childhood, somewhat fortunate to have survived infancy, yet her prize was a bleak future with few prospects. Tilly found an escape in the theatre as she marvelled at the glitz and glamour of showbiz, and it was these jolly entertainers who inspired little Tilly to break out of the abject poverty she had been born into. Working 12-hour days six days a week in sweatshops after she left school, Tilly decided that an honest living was a fool's game. The blonde-haired, blue-eyed belle sold herself on the Strand, bringing in £20 a week – a vast sum compared to the relatively respectable working-class wage of £3.

Tilly met her husband, 24-year-old Australian soldier James Edward Joseph Devine when the Great War was in its third year. A good-looking young man, he was a sapper in the Fourth Tunnelling Company of the Australian Imperial Force and a former shearer (although he told his new lady that he owned a kangaroo farm Down Under.) Otherwise known as 'Big Jim', Writer described him as a man who “used the word ‘fuck’ as if it were a comma”. The pair married the following year at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Camberwell. A lazy liar with a violent and deadly temper, he



'Big Jim' Devine would beat and humiliate his wife Tilly, but for years she was reliant on him for his barbaric temper, affording her protection from the rest of the criminal underworld

was unfazed by Tilly's chosen profession and insisted that his new bride continue whoring herself out. By today's standards Tilly would have been considered a victim of sex trafficking, but to her she was an entrepreneurial breadwinner and on her way out of poverty.

When the war was over Jim returned to Australia, and a year later Tilly followed, only to find that her new husband was not really a kangaroo farmer but a crook. Immediately she began prostituting herself from his Paddington flat while her husband worked as her pimp, and made money through any illegal means possible. Tilly charged top dollar for her services – ten shillings – and always collected her earnings. Anyone seen to be trying to wangle out of paying came face to face with her enforcer husband or, even worse, Tilly herself, whose fury was as formidable a force as her seductive looks. She was, according to one policeman, “a beautiful young woman with a deep, husky, fascinating voice,” while another observer described her as having a “complex of milk and roses and hair the colour of a hay rick in summer”.

Between 1921 and 1924 Tilly was arrested 79 times for whoring, obscene language, offensive behaviour and brawling. In February 1925 she was sentenced for attacking a man in a barber shop. Meanwhile her husband was sent to prison for living off the earnings of a prostitute and given an 18-month sentence. On release Tilly, now 25, decided she would take a new course of action.

While the Police Offences (Amendment) Act of 1908 had made prostitution illegal, it also prohibited men from running brothels, but it failed to mention that a woman was unable to do so, and Tilly took advantage of this loophole. She bought a slum cottage in Palmer Street and set up shop, placing a red light in the front window to indicate that she was open for business as a madam, taking as much as 50 per cent of the earnings her 'girls' made. Tilly looked after her staff, and so long as they were loyal and didn't try to cheat her she made sure they were fed, housed and protected from violent customers. Meanwhile Jim Devine sold the women cocaine,



Tilly and Kate had numerous rivals – and not just men. Prostitute Nellie Cameron was a colourful character in Razorhurst until she killed herself aged 41

CHARLOTTE LANE

After breaking an unspoken agreement between the criminal factions and encroaching on his rivals' territory, Norman Bruhn was led to Charlotte Lane on 22 June 1927, where he was shot and killed by an unknown assailant.

PALMER STREET

The Tradesman's Arms, also called the 'Bloodhouse' was Tilly's stomping ground, frequented by gangsters such as Frank Green, Guido Calletti, as well as prostitutes Nellie Cameron and Dulcie Markham.

PALMER STREET

House number 191 in the run-down red-light district of Palmer Street was the sometime home and later the central brothel of Sydney madam Tilly Devine.

KELLETT STREET

Tilly's gang, armed with razors and guns, stormed one of Kate's stomping grounds in July 1929, attempting to intimidate her men. But the gang fought back, and rising tensions escalated into a full-blown battle with 40 participants. One man was shot and others severely wounded.

EATON AVENUE

The site of the grisly 'Battle of Blood Alley' on 7 May 1929, gangsters attacked one another with boots, razors, guns and clubs following a fallout between crime boss Phil Jeffs and a Woolloomooloo gang over dodgy cocaine-cutting enterprises.

WILLIAM STREET

The fourth floor of what was called Chard House on William Street was the infamous 'Fifty-Fifty Club' owned by gangland boss Phil Jeffs.

KIPPAX STREET

Multiple houses were owned by Kate Leigh and used for robbing passing victims by inviting them in to sell them alcohol, before drugging them with spiked drinks.

LANSDOWNE STREET

Kate's Surry Hill home. The terraced house became the main location for her sly grog trade and became known as the 'Lansdowne Hotel' (such a place does legally exist elsewhere in Broadway).

KING'S LANE

The street was the stomping ground of Norman Bruhn, a violent criminal and master wielder of the razor. He and his gang – 'Snowy' Cutmore, George 'the Midnight Raper' Wallace and 'Razor' Jack Hayes – terrorised the residents.

RILEY STREET

On 27 March 1930 Kate came face to face with four gangsters looking for her henchman Wally Tomlinson, who had informed on Frank Green for shooting him. She shot one man in the stomach, killing him. Police arrested her for attempted murder but she was found not guilty on the grounds of self-defence.

WELCOME TO RAZORHURST

FOR DECADES, EAST SYDNEY WAS THE BACKDROP OF SLASHINGS, STABBINGS, WARS, CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES AND MANY OTHER SHOCKING EVENTS

attempting to get them hooked, as it was much easier to pay prostitutes in drugs than cash. As her business grew, Tilly invested in multiple properties across Darlinghurst.

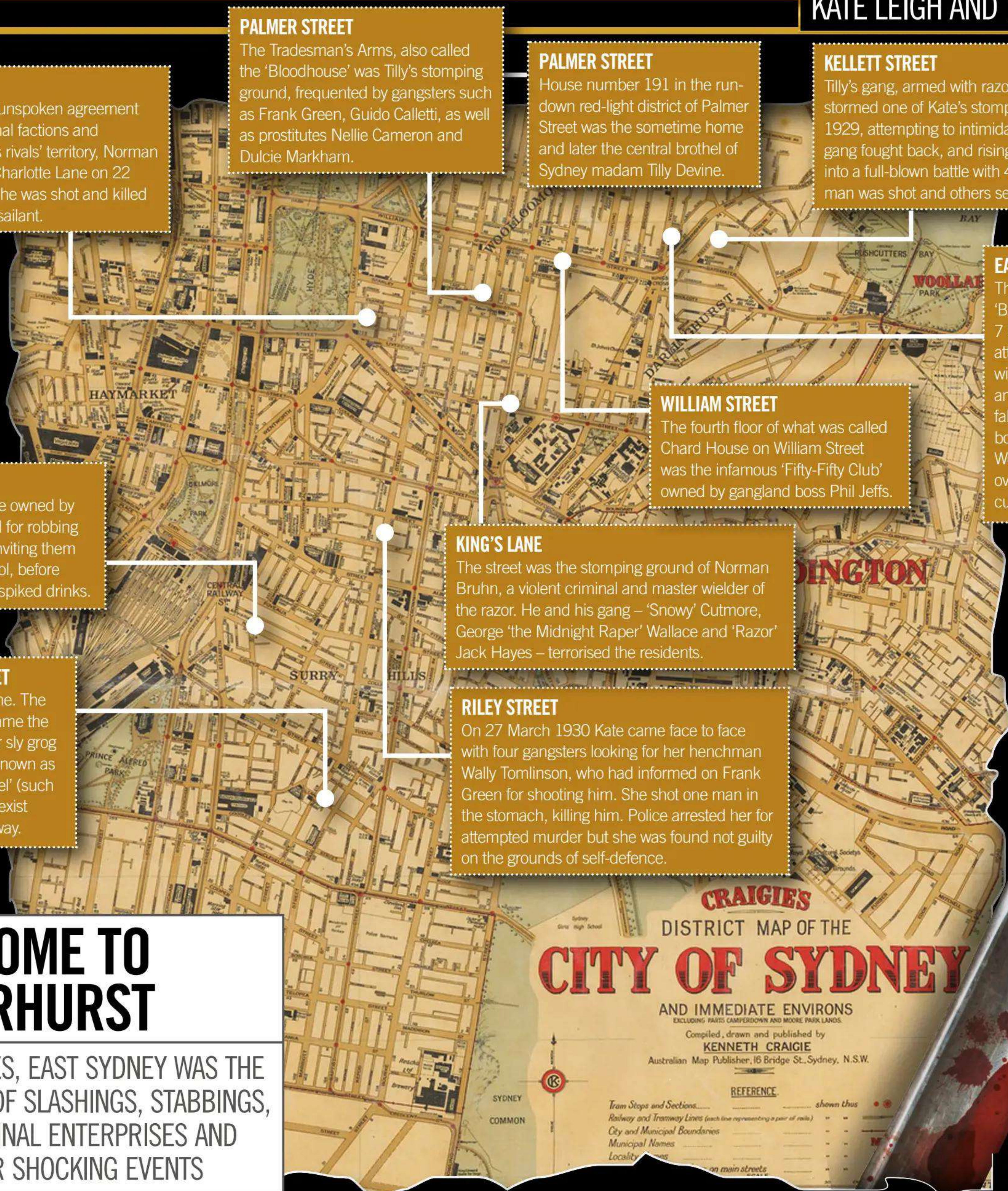
CHICAGO OF THE EAST

When the handgun was outlawed under the 1927 Pistol Licensing Act, violent offenders adopted a new weapon of choice: the razor. Not intended to kill (although deaths often occurred in violent brawls), the injuries of the blade – an ugly L-shaped scar across the cheek extending down to the mouth – signalled that the afflicted had found themselves mixed up with something or someone dangerous, and in 'Razorhurst' there were plenty of them about. Tilly's brothels dotted across Darlinghurst, Woolloomooloo and Kings Cross. Kate's territory for her stolen goods operation, sly grog shops and cocaine deals circled Darlinghurst, where she was named 'Queen of Surry Hills'. As well as the female criminal bosses, there were male gangsters like Phil Jeffs, who took

care of the drug deals, sly grog shops and cocaine rings in Kings Cross and Woolloomooloo, and Norman Bruhn, whose business was prostitutes, sly grog shops, drug peddlers and dodgy building rentals in Kings Cross and Darlinghurst.

A shift in the balance arose when Norman Bruhn attempted to extort protection money from the other three. All hell broke loose as the gangs butted heads. It became known as the 'Razor Gang Wars', and the years between 1927-1931 saw the worst mob war in Australian history. Australian tabloids, aware of the Al Capone era plaguing the USA on the other side of the globe, declared east Sydney "the Chicago of the South" and a "breeding place of vice".

Norman Bruhn and his crew were taken out of the equation on 22 June 1927 during a dramatic shooting on Charlotte Lane. While police hunted for his killer, some suspected that either Tilly or Kate had had him killed to stop him encroaching on their turf, but the victim had been a man with many enemies. His case remains unsolved to this day. Following his death, Bruhn's razor gang disintegrated, leaving



Tilly, Kate and Phil Jeffs at the top of the criminal food chain, and while some tried to fill the gap in the criminal market, the dangerous trio remained the powerful heads of the Sydney underworld.

The war raged on in Bruhn's absence. At times, Tilly and Kate's rivalry was personal. As the leading female criminal masterminds of Sydney, each strived to be more vulgar, more extravagant, more wealthy and more feared than the other and were not opposed to fighting each other in the streets one on one when their paths crossed. In a bid to outdo one another, Kate Leigh would encourage her entourage to disfigure Tilly's prostitutes. In retaliation, Tilly would have her heavies attack Kate's criminal decoys and smash up her sly grog shops. Kate would in turn send her gangsters to Tilly's brothels to exact revenge. The whole time the women aired their mutual dislike to police and journalists.

The war in Sydney was brought to a head with the Battle Of Blood Alley in May 1929. It was ignited by their male rival when a Woolloomooloo gang grew wise to Phil Jeffs's methods of cutting quality cocaine with boric acid for an increase in profits from his cocaine business. The gang challenged Phil Jeffs to a brawl in Eaton Avenue in Kings Cross, where he was shot and left on the verge of death. Breaking an unwritten criminal code of conduct, Jeffs named his attacker as Jim Taylor. When he realised he was going to live, he quickly changed his story, insisting that a masked intruder in his home had shot him. He then quickly retreated to Woy Woy in New South Wales.

Weeks later a deadly shootout broke out between the two Sydney queens on 17 July 1929. Kate's gang, led by her henchman Gregory Gaffney, ambushed Tilly's most brutal gangster, Frank Green, and his right hand man, Sid McDonald. When the Devines stumbled upon a severely wounded Green and a panic-stricken McDonald, they retreated to their Maroubra home, ready for the next wave of the attack, which came just after midnight. Ambling over their fence, Gregory Gaffney was shot dead by Jim Devine, bringing the bloody siege to an end. Tilly's husband was then led away by police, who had flocked to the scene of the battle, and charged him with murder. But in court he was found not guilty after insisting he had opened fire to intimidate the intruders rather than to kill him. The judge ruled that Jim Devine had been trying to protect his home and family and had acted justifiably.

Tensions between the two women's gangs were rising with every passing day, and police, fearful that more blood would be shed, attempted to prevent every possible opportunity for a rematch. Their attempts were futile when Jim Devine and Frank Green approached Kate's men Barney Dalton and Wally Tomlinson after closing time at the pub on 9 November 1929, shooting both of them. Like Phil Jeffs before him, Wally Tomlinson believed he was on death's door and duly named his assailants, but after his friend died and he survived he realised he was in hot water for giving up his attackers. At the inquest into his friend's death in January 1930, Tomlinson removed Jim Devine's name. Tilly cheered as her husband was dismissed from the case, but police had too much evidence against Frank Green to let him walk free.

His first trial resulted in a deadlocked jury. A second trial was rearranged for June 1930 and the gangster, nicknamed 'the little gunman', was sent back to prison. Tomlinson became the target of Tilly's men. When they attempted to burst into Kate's home in the hope that the key witness would be there, one of Tilly's men lost his life after Kate opened fire on the intruders. A jury acquitted her of murder,



Although both Kate (pictured) and Tilly were notorious in Sydney, they attempted to show humanity later in life, often giving extensively to charity and helping underprivileged children.

believing she had only meant to incapacitate him and shoot him in the leg but had missed. Frank Green's second murder trial ended in a not guilty verdict, leaving him free to roam the streets. The war between the razor gangs raged. Kate would often place snipers on her properties to stop Tilly's gang from approaching them in the hope of revenge.

CALLING A TRUCE

But the beginning of the end for the razor gangs and their war came in January 1930 with the newly passed New South Wales Vagrancy (Amendment) Act 1929. The consorting clause was created to target the east Sydney outlaws, specifying that anyone who "habitually consorts with reputed thieves, or prostitutes, or vagrant persons who have no visible or legal means of support" would face jail time. Along with the clause, the Consorting Squad was formed within the police – a crack team tasked with keeping tabs on the whereabouts of criminals. Six bookings in a six-month period would result in a prison term. The clause prevented the gangs from meeting up in public, although they often met in the privacy of their homes. That same year came the Crimes Amendment Bill, threatening an automatic six month sentence for anyone unlawfully possessing a razor.

Tilly was facing a plethora of charges in January 1930, and, in a bid to save herself the jail time, promised the judge she would leave for England to look after her sick mother and stay away from Sydney for two years. She entrusted her empire to her ruthless husband. Threatened with yet another jail term, occasionally gang members would give police valuable information on the other gangs in return for turning a blind eye to their misdemeanours, and eventually police were constantly one step ahead of the Sydney gangs. That winter Kate was arrested for possession of cocaine and given a 12-month prison sentence. She was told she could pay a fine of £250 to avoid a second year behind bars and, much to the annoyance of the police, authorities released her after a year and allowed her to pay her fine in small instalments.

Out of prison, she continued to be a nuisance and often found herself in trouble with police, getting fined and



imprisoned for short terms. Unsurprisingly Tilly did not make good on her promise to the judge, and after nine months away from Sydney she returned in January 1931.

While gangland warfare had simmered down, crime was still rife in Australia thanks to plummeting economic conditions and mass unemployment. In 1936 Police Commissioner William McKay summoned the women to the police headquarters and offered a compromise: They could continue to run their brothels and sly grog shops if they called a truce and stopped the war on one another. While they were not excused from abiding by the law, if they informed police about the activities of the other gangs, the harassment they felt from police would not increase or encroach on their businesses. The Devines had to cease selling cocaine and Tilly's workers had to stop scamming clients for more money (otherwise called 'gingering'). Knowing a good deal when it presented itself, the women promised they would try to get along.

As stricter laws were imposed throughout the 1930s the women's final male rival went bust and his criminal business days came to a swift end. Shortly after that the cocaine trade diminished under the watchful eye of the law. When World War II started Tilly and Kate's beloved Razorhurst ceased to exist as the remaining gangsters from the Razor Wars were sent to the battlefield. Those left behind were middle aged and slower on their feet. Kate, who was almost 60, and Tilly, soon to be 40, were tired of conflict, and instead of declaring war on newcomers on their patch, they took a step back.

Tilly divorced her husband in 1938, having been on the receiving end of his violent temper for far too long. She got remarried to Eric Parsons, who had been a part-time barman in a pub in Tilly's stomping ground, the Tradesman's Arms

“WHEN KATE COULD NOT AFFORD THE THOUSANDS OF POUNDS SHE'D BEEN FINED, SHE DECLARED HERSELF BANKRUPT”

Hotel. Jim Devine moved to Melbourne and faded into obscurity, and the once-feared gangster died in the 1960s. In 1947 Kate Leigh married Jewey's driver from the Everleigh Heist in 1947 at the age of 66. He later deserted her and ran off to Fremantle. He died in 1954.

The 1950s for Tilly and Kate saw the depletion of their funds, as the taxman grew wise to their obvious wealth compared to the tax paid on their businesses and income. The department demanded payment, and when Kate could not afford the thousands of pounds she'd been fined, she declared herself bankrupt. She carried on attempting to sell illegal alcohol from a room she rented for £2 a week above her nephews's fruit and veg shop. In 1954 the government announced the end of the 6pm closing hours, extending them to 10pm. Kate's sly grog business was officially finished. The following year Tilly was ordered to pay more than £20,000 in unpaid income tax and fines. Her savings of £4,000 were taken and she was ordered her to pay the rest immediately. She sold almost everything to make the payments, and in the end had just one hovel of a home left on Palmer Street.

On 31 January 1964, 82-year-old Kate suffered a stroke and slipped into a coma. She died four days later. “God rest the old bitch's soul,” Tilly would say. She survived her arch rival by another six years, switching off the red light in her Palmer Street brothel window in 1968. She died on 24 November 1970 from cancer, bringing an end to the era of Razorhurst.

ABOVE Wanting to crack down on crime, New South Wales's police commissioner forced Kate and Tilly to get along following years of bloody battle in the streets between the pair's gangs



INSET Shad Thyrion enjoyed camping and video games and was a talented artist with a particular passion for wood carving

OPPOSITE, TOP "I felt bad. I was like, damn, he's gonna be wheezing after this, I might as well just kill him." So said Taylor Schabusiness when police asked if she realised she was killing Shad



HER LOVER'S HEAD IN A BUCKET

A LETHAL COCKTAIL OF KINKY SEX, PSYCHOACTIVE DRUGS
AND MENTAL ILLNESS TURNED AN OTHERWISE CHILLED-OUT
MONDAY NIGHT IN GREEN BAY INTO A GRUESOME BLOODBATH

WORDS GAVIN MACKENZIE

Nobody should do drugs. But some people should not do drugs more than others. For example, if drugs make you paranoid, unstable, and physically unwell, then those are all very common, standard reasons not to do drugs. But if drugs make you strangle a friend to death

before decapitating, dismembering and disembowelling their body, then that's a whole other story – and that is precisely what happened when Taylor Schabusiness and Shad Thyron, two people who definitely should not have done drugs, consumed a whole cocktail of narcotics.

The two had become friends while at high school in the Green Bay area of Wisconsin, USA. They were never formally girlfriend and boyfriend, but they often hung out, sometimes took drugs together and sometimes even had sex. During the period leading up to 21 February 2022, with both now in their mid-twenties, they had been experimenting with sadomasochism, and choking had become part of their sexual “routine”. We’re not about to kink-shame here. What consenting adults do behind closed doors is their own business. The kinky sex wasn’t the problem. The problem, as mentioned already, was the drugs.

That evening, Schabusiness (formerly Coronado) had been hanging out in the apartment she shared with at least one other friend. At about 21:30 p.m., she took her flatmate’s car and drove over to Shad’s mother’s house to pick up Shad. They went back to the apartment and, somewhere along the line, scored some cannabis and some methamphetamine, a potent drug more commonly known as “crystal meth”. Together they smoked a quantity of both drugs, as well as injecting themselves with trazodone, a commonly prescribed anti-depressant. It’s not clear if they took the trazodone for medicinal or recreational reasons.

Later that night the couple went back to Shad’s mother’s house, descended into the basement and began indulging in their usual form of foreplay. According to Schabusiness, Shad took two metal chains out of his pocket, and they wrapped the chains around their necks. The idea was that they would take turns choking each other. Schabusiness went first.

“He didn’t get the chance to strangle me,” she later told police.

“I LIKED IT”

Elaborating further on the topic of mutual strangulation, Schabusiness explained to detectives, “That was the thing. And then like, I don’t know, I went... a little crazy.”

By “a little crazy” Schabusiness meant that she kept pulling on the chains until Shad started trying to fight her off. But she was too sexually excited to stop, so she kept strangling him and didn’t stop until he was dead.

“I didn’t mean for all this to happen,” she told Green Bay PD’s Detective David Graf. “I fucked up. I know I fucked up. I’m like... shit. Yeah, I’m sorry.”

“But you liked it?” responded Graf.

“I liked it.”

She liked it so much that she continued “playing” with Shad’s body for a few hours after realising he was dead. She cuddled him, ground against him, played with his penis, put a dildo in his mouth and rectum, and even performed oral sex on him.

“He was half-hard,” she said, “And I was still suckin’ after he was dead.”

“I was worried that I was doing that too well,” she added with a nervous giggle.

Incredibly, it gets worse. Once she eventually started coming down off of her sex- and drug-induced high, Schabusiness realised not only that she had to move the body, but also that Shad was too large for her to move in one piece. So she crept upstairs to the kitchen, found a selection of knives, moved Shad’s body so that his head was hanging over one end of the bed and began carving through his neck.

“I LIKED THE HEAD”

TAYLOR SPOKE CALMLY AND FRANKLY THROUGHOUT HER POLICE INTERVIEWS AND SAID SOME VERY STRANGE THINGS

SCHABUSINESS: I can’t believe I left the head there.

INTERVIEWER: Were you going to take the head somewhere?

SCHABUSINESS: I liked the head.

INTERVIEWER: You liked it?

SCHABUSINESS: (nodding and speaking very softly) I liked the head.

INTERVIEWER: What did you do with the body parts?

SCHABUSINESS: They’re in the house.

INTERVIEWER: Basement? Upstairs?

SCHABUSINESS: Absolutely in the basement. And then... (loudly) I know I grabbed the head. I wanted the head.

INTERVIEWER: How did you dismember his body, then?

SCHABUSINESS: Knives.

INTERVIEWER: Knives?

RIGHT Knives, bags, dog chains, and a large quantity of blood were found all over the basement of Shad Thyron’s mother’s house

BELOW Schabusiness said she kept falling asleep while dismembering the body but kept cutting in her sleep. This might explain how frequently she cut her own hands and arms



SCHABUSINESS: About four?

INTERVIEWER: Where did you get those from?

SCHABUSINESS: The kitchen. Because mine wasn't sharp enough.

INTERVIEWER: They weren't sharp?

SCHABUSINESS: No... no. It was alright... bread knife works good.

INTERVIEWER: A bread knife?

SCHABUSINESS: A bread knife works good, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: (incredulously) Really?

SCHABUSINESS: (laughing) I had to use what I had to use.

INTERVIEWER: Where would these knives be now?

SCHABUSINESS: They're in with all the organs and all the body parts... in the black bag... in the basement.

INTERVIEWER: So, when did you realise that Shad was not alive any more?

SCHABUSINESS: His face turned purple, he was coughing up blood, and he was pissing himself.

INTERVIEWER: He was pissing himself, his face was all purple...

SCHABUSINESS: I still didn't stop. I don't know what was going on.

“HIS FACE TURNED PURPLE, HE WAS COUGHING UP BLOOD, AND HE WAS PISSING HIMSELF”

INTERVIEWER: So, blood was coming out of his mouth?

SCHABUSINESS: [unintelligible]...feeling his heartbeat, hearing his heartbeat.

INTERVIEWER: I'm sorry?

SCHABUSINESS: Hearing his heartbeat slip.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Did you hear it stop?

SCHABUSINESS: Nooo... no.

INTERVIEWER: You figured he was dead then?

SCHABUSINESS: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And what did you do?

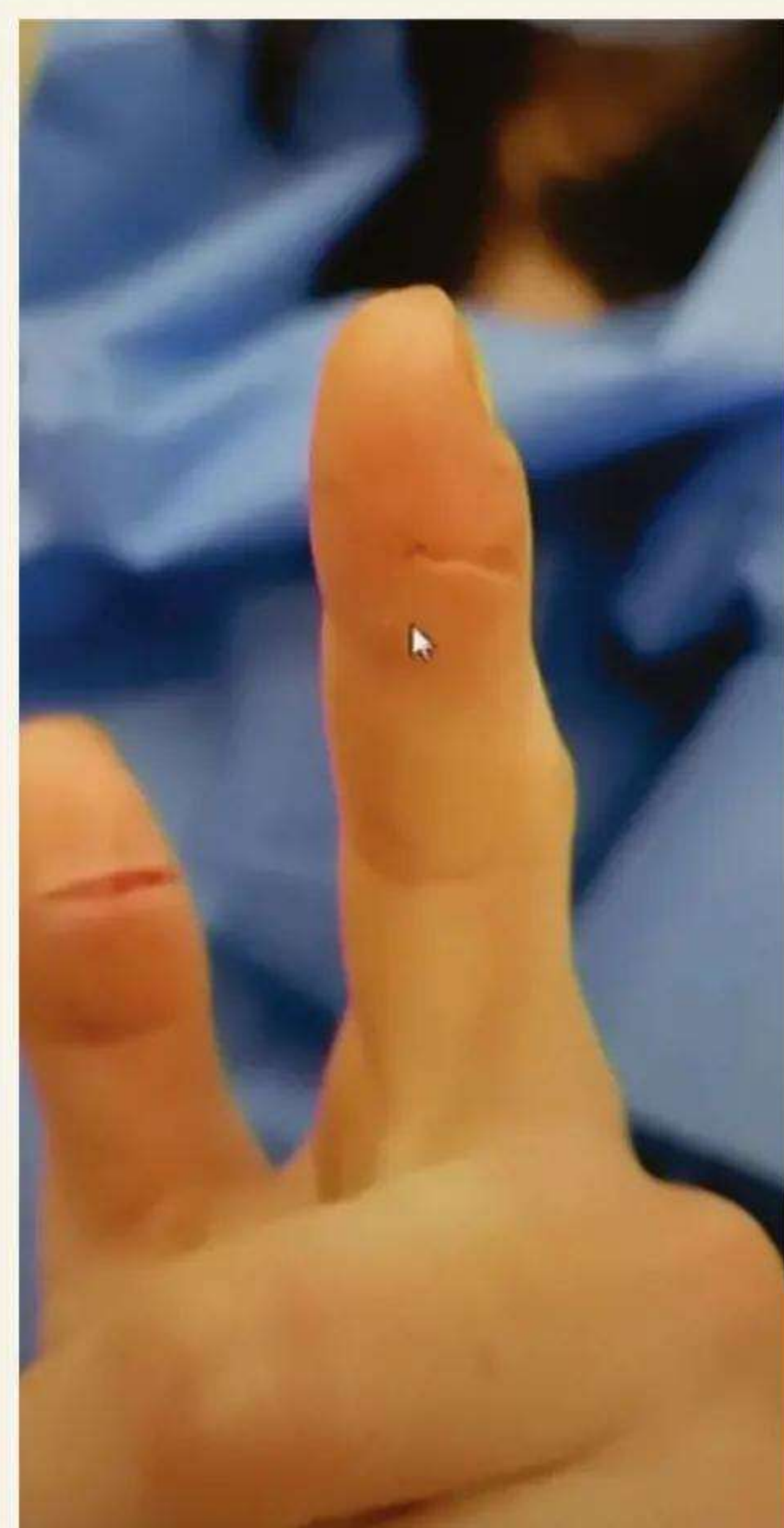
SCHABUSINESS: Played with him, a little bit.

INTERVIEWER: When you say 'play with him' what do you mean?

SCHABUSINESS: Played with his dick. [unintelligible]... the bed, and then, um... sucked... sucked his dick.



ABOVE While he'd been arrested on two occasions – for minor offences such as disorderly conduct and resisting arrest – Shad's record was mostly clean



This was the start of a horrific process that must have gone on for hours. Schabusiness removed Shad's head, genitals, limbs and internal organs, all using just regular kitchen knives. During her interview with Graf, she giggled as she acted out the sawing motion she had used.

"I went like this with the knife, so there's blood fucking going everywhere. Sorry."

She was apologising for swearing, not for carving her ex-lover into pieces.

Some 24 hours after killing Shad, Schabusiness decided it was time to pack up his remains and leave, but she got – in her own words – "lazy". After placing a cardboard box containing various segments of his legs into the car, she didn't bother going back to get anything else. She left body parts in various containers and locations around the basement, including his head and genitals in a black bucket at the foot of the stairs.

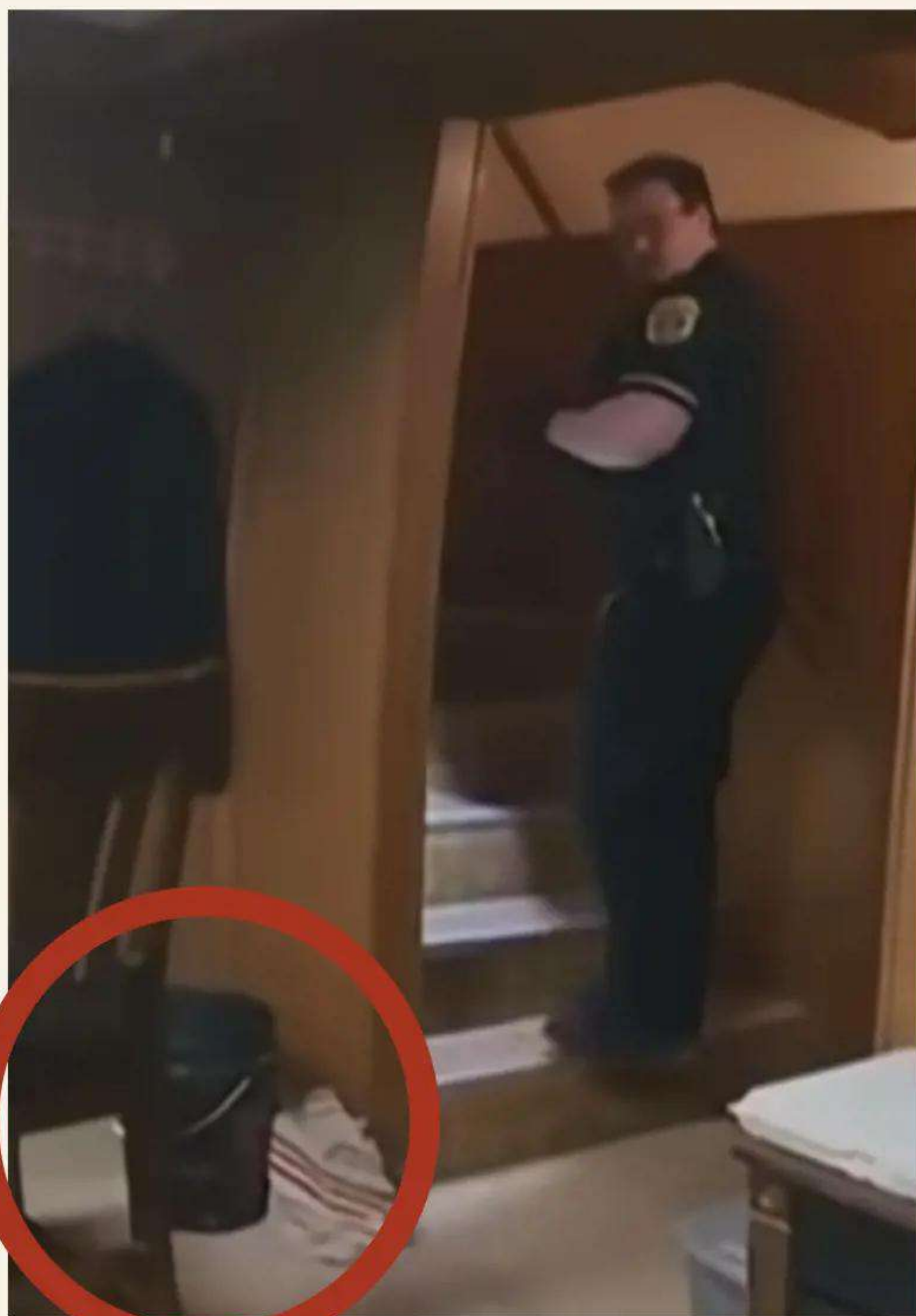
At about 03:00 a.m on the morning of 23 February, Shad's mother, Tara Pakanich, was awoken by the sound of a door slamming and a car driving away. She went down to the basement to see if her son was still there, and found his head in the bucket. She called the police and told them that Shad had last been seen with Schabusiness.

About two hours later, Schabusiness was arrested at her apartment. She made no attempt to resist arrest or even to deny her guilt.

"IT WAS WEIRD"

Schabusiness' police interviews make for bizarre, disturbing viewing. The detectives questioning her take a typically non-confrontational, "we're on your side" approach throughout and she immediately buys into it, sharing her story with honesty, sincerity, frankness and a fair degree of accuracy. But she expresses no strong emotions whatsoever. She's quietly nervous and occasionally laughs at how strange her crime was, but she mostly describes it like a witness detailing something that happened, rather than a perpetrator discussing something that she did. She seems to sincerely regret killing Shad but isn't visibly upset about it at all.

She repeatedly says how weird it was, as if that wasn't already very, very obvious, and even says, "You know what I mean?" as if the two detectives could possibly relate to her account of getting so turned on that she killed her lover and molested his corpse. The first interview took place more than 24 hours after



she smoked crystal meth, but she may still have been experiencing its effects. However, there was likely a lot more to it than that.

Schabusiness has been receiving treatment for a variety of mental health issues since the age of seven. The diagnoses and their treatments have been many and varied, but the majority view is that she has bipolar disorder with psychosis. In fact, her defence attorney lodged an insanity plea on the grounds that her mental illness rendered her incapable of knowing what she was doing when she committed her crimes (or at least that she didn't know it was wrong). This plea may have carried some weight had she not been on methamphetamine at the time. Even if she really didn't know what was happening when she killed and dismembered Shad – and her detailed account suggests that she did for the most part – she definitely knew what she was doing when she smoked the meth, which means it's all her own responsibility. The jury had no hesitation in rejecting the plea.

To be clear, the rejection of an insanity plea doesn't mean that a defendant is perfectly sane. It just means that their mental illness cannot be held responsible for their actions. Schabusiness is clearly very unwell, and the sad fact is that she likely turned to drugs in the first place as a way of dealing with the pain and chaos inside her own mind. A sad fact, but not any kind of excuse.

NO LAUGHING MATTER

While she was cooperative, polite and frank during her arrest and police interviews, Schabusiness' model behaviour did not transfer to jail or to the courtroom. In jail she smeared her own excrement on the walls of her cell and threw it at other inmates, and on another occasion she



ABOVE LEFT This still from bodycam footage shows the bucket containing Shad's head and genitals in the bottom-left of the image

ABOVE RIGHT Apparently upset by Judge Thomas Walsh's decision to delay the start of her trial, Schabusiness attacked her lawyer, Quinn Jolly

BELOW Since February 2020, Schabusiness has been married to Warren Schabow, with whom she has a young son named Mateo. Warren is currently also serving prison time for armed burglary but is (according to his social media posts) due for release in late 2023 or early 2024



“ IN JAIL SHE SMEARED HER OWN EXCREMENT ON THE WALLS OF HER CELL AND THREW IT AT OTHER INMATES ”

launched a chair at a mental health professional. In court, she inexplicably attacked her own attorney during a pre-trial hearing. The attorney understandably then asked to withdraw from her case.

During the trial her strange behaviour continued. She frequently smirked or smiled and sometimes even laughed. This was usually for no discernible reason, although in one instance (the point where she laughed the most) there was a twisted logic behind her chuckling. A witness named AJ (a mutual friend of both Schabusiness and Shad) was describing the events of the evening prior to the crime and made an unfortunate choice of words. He said that he had been with Schabusiness and Shad at the apartment and that they had just been “chopping it up”. This is slang meaning to catch up socially (something like “shooting the breeze”), but the accidental pun was not lost on Schabusiness, who could hardly contain her amusement.

At other times her smiles, smirks and other facial expressions are often out of sync with what's actually being discussed in court. It's as if she's reacting to whatever's going on inside her head, and given her mental health issues, this may well be the case. One could almost feel sorry for her, were it not for her appalling crimes.

No clear motive emerged from the trial, other than that Schabusiness simply enjoyed choking too much to be able

PIECE BY PIECE

ON THE SECOND DAY OF SCHABUSINESS' TRIAL, DANE COUNTY DEPUTY MEDICAL EXAMINER DR. VINCENT TRANCHIDA EXPLAINED WHAT HAD BEEN DONE TO SHAD'S BODY FOLLOWING HIS DEATH IN HORRIFIC DETAIL

1 BACK AND NECK

This was flayed and extensively de-fleshed, meaning that the skin was removed along with most of the muscle, revealing both the spine and rib cage.

2 TORSO TORN

In order to get inside the body, Schabusiness had cut the torso in half, from neck to groin. She seemingly did this not just to remove organs but to put things inside the body too.

3 CHEST CAVITY

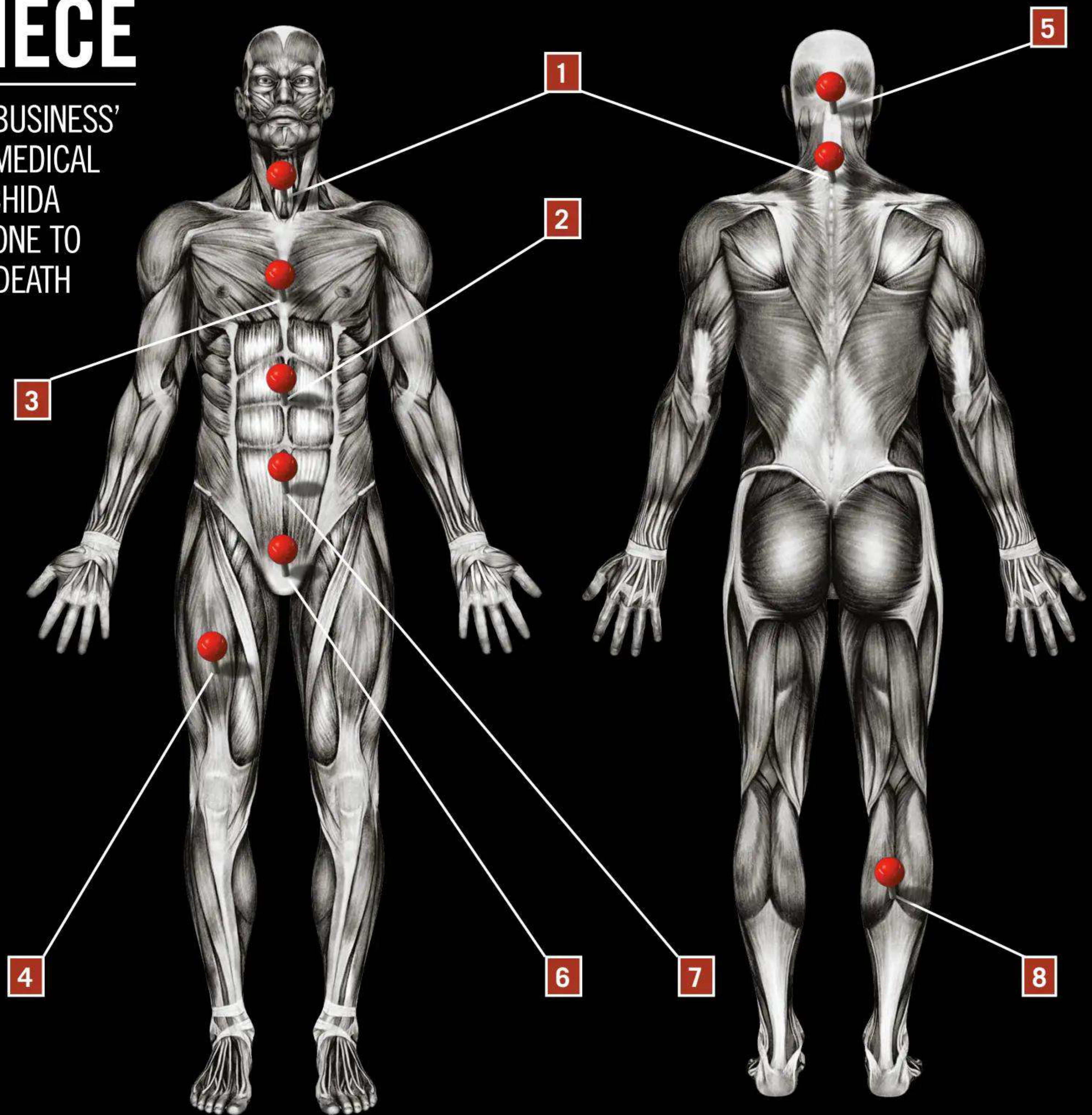
When law enforcement officers found the torso, they also found the left foot stuffed inside the chest cavity. Schabusiness had cut it off and relocated it for reasons even she doesn't know.

4 DEFLESHED THIGH

All tissue had been removed from the right thigh, leaving little except the femur, or thigh bone. The rest of the right leg, however, from the right knee to the right foot, was still intact.

5 DECAPITATION

The long process of dismembering the body started with the removal of the head. Schabusiness placed a container under the head, and gradually sawed through the neck with a bread knife.



6 EMASCULATION

When police lifted the head out of the black bucket by the basement stairs, they found Shad's penis and testicles lying underneath in among blood and pieces of flesh of undetermined origin.

7 EVISCERATION

Schabusiness removed the internal organs, one at a time according to the medical examiner. She even removed the entire length of the intestines.

8 DRAINED

As a result of this thorough dismemberment, most of the blood had drained out of the body. Schabusiness poured a lot of it down the basement shower drain, but there was a lot at crime scene, as well as on her hands and clothes.

to stop. There was no evidence that she planned to kill Shad, although an investigation into her phone's search history revealed an unhealthy interest in Jeffrey Dahmer. So perhaps she found his crimes relatable, and maybe she was acting out a long-held fantasy when she killed Shad.

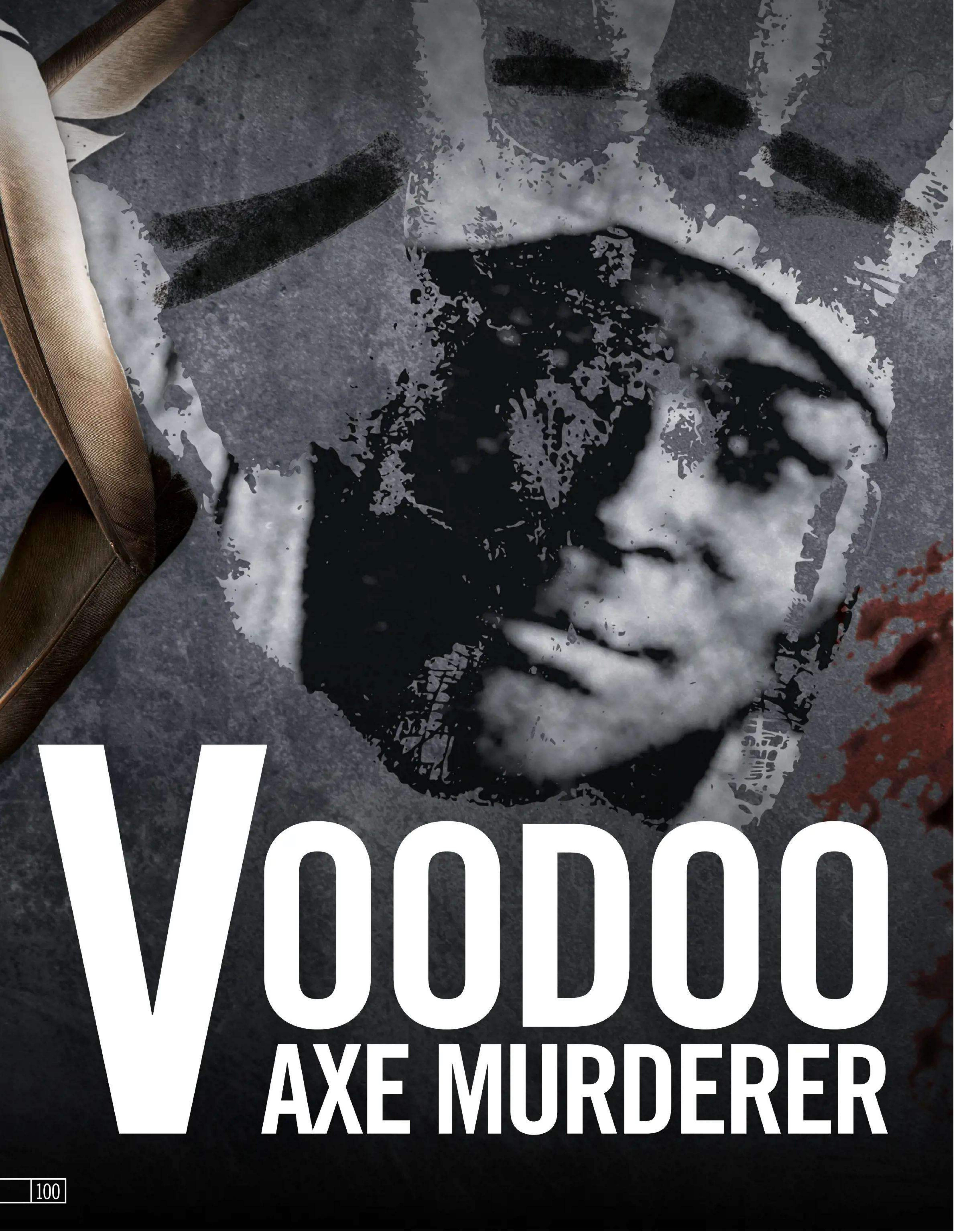
Regardless of why she murdered her friend, it was very clear that she had. She had given a detailed confession without any coercion at all, and her account was supported by a wealth of material evidence. The trial only lasted three days, and the jury returned a guilty verdict after just 50 minutes of deliberation.

On 26 July 2023, Schabusiness was found guilty of first-degree intentional homicide, of mutilating a corpse




and of third-degree sexual assault. She expressed little emotion as the verdict was read out, simply bowing her head and furrowing her eyebrows. On 26 September 2023, Schabusiness was sentenced to life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

Drug use and mental illness both likely played a part in these horrific crimes, but ultimately they can't be blamed. Taylor Schabusiness might genuinely be a troubled, tormented, tortured individual, but the bottom line is that she killed her friend and mutilated his body for no better reason than to get her sexual kicks. To follow in the footsteps of her apparent "inspiration", Jeffrey Dahmer, is exactly what she deserves.



WOODOO AXE MURDERER

A dark, atmospheric photograph. In the upper right, a wooden axe head is visible, its flat surface splattered with red paint or blood. Below the axe, on a grey, textured surface, are several white chalk drawings. These include a large, irregular circle with internal lines, and several star-like or cross-like shapes. A large, dark, irregular shape, possibly a bloodstain or a large splash of red paint, dominates the lower left and center of the image. The overall mood is mysterious and unsettling.

**IN THE DEEP SOUTH IN THE EARLY
1900S A TERROR CREPT AROUND AT
NIGHT, BREAKING OPEN SLEEPY HEADS
WITH THE FLAT OF AN AXE IN HONOUR
OF A MYSTERIOUS REVIVAL CHURCH**

WORDS JAMES HOARE

**“LAID ON THE DOCK, I GOT A
PAIN IN THE HEAD
WHEN I WOKE UP, TO TELL THE
TRUTH, I FOUND MYSELF DEAD”**

- Jim Towel, ‘I’ve Been Hoodooed’

In February 1912 a chill pressed upon the windowpane as the family was murdered, their brains crudely bashed out by the flat heft of an axe while they slept. The atrocity didn’t stop with the deaths of Alexandre Andrus, his wife Mimi, his three-year-old son Joachim and his 11-month-old daughter Agnes.

Sometime after 7am, Mimi’s brother Lezime Felix stumbled across the gruesome tableaux, and what he saw must have turned his stomach and broken his heart. It was a scene so macabre that Sheriff Louis LaCoste and Deputy Coroner Clark, accompanied by a score of deputies, crossed the railway tracks from the whitewashed colonial facades of downtown Lafayette immediately. There’s no record of LaCoste and Clark’s political beliefs – indeed, both appear diligent public servants – but the haste with which these two officials in Jim Crow-era Louisiana attended the murders of a black Creole family so poor they could boast only one bed between them, speaks volumes about what had been seen.

Inside the cabin, the bodies of Alexandre and Mimi had been placed by the bedside, propped up on their knees with the woman’s arm draped over her husband’s shoulders as if in prayer. The baby and the toddler were laid in front of them on the bed. Were it not for the gore, the gristle and the brain splattered across the sheets, it would have appeared almost serene. Despite the chill, Dr Clark – who arrived first and showed LaCoste around – reported that the bodies were still warm, placing the time of death at around midnight. The killer had entered the shack through the kitchen door, done their terrible deed and then exited the way they came.

This was no robbery: four lives was all that had been stolen. Like a rational man, LaCoste blamed the irrational. The only lead was Garçon Godfry, an escaped lunatic from Pineville, less than 130 kilometres from Lafayette. Shaking down Godfry’s mother, they eventually brought him in and returned him to the asylum. They were, however, unable to connect him to the murder – Godfry’s whereabouts had been thoroughly accounted for. According to *The Lafayette Advertiser* further arrests were made, but like the earlier pursuit of the straitjacketed scapegoat they came to naught. New suspicions began to form that they were looking at more than one night of horror. The axe had fallen before.

MURDER BECOMES SERIAL

A month earlier, in January 1912, a family of three had been murdered in nearby Crowley. A couple of years earlier still, in September 1909, the same fate had befallen a family in Rayne, another town within striking distance of Lafayette, over the boundary in Acadia Parish. The victims were black, and all had been murdered with an axe, but they weren’t subjected to the same gruesome nativity scene as the Andrus family. Nor had they been neatly brained with the blunt side of the tool – they’d been decapitated and dismembered.

But the real showpiece had come in January 1912. Felix Broussard, his wife and their three children were slaughtered in Lake Charles, a town further out along the



SACRIFICES HUMAINS EN LOUISIANE

Concours du Supplément
du PETIT JOURNAL
N° 2

rail line past Rayne and Crowley. This was a call-back to the Andrus murders with its elaborate staging, and like the those murders it dripped with dark magic. The Broussards were found laid out across the sheets, each skull crushed by the blunt of an axe. The weapon itself had been left under the bed. The scene was strangely bloodless – the victims’ gore had been collected in a bucket as it left their bodies – but the most unsettling detail was their hands: each finger had been separated, held splayed apart with wooden pins and rolled-up pieces of paper. Written above the door were the words “Human Five” and on the wall was a Biblical passage, bastardised from Psalm Nine: “When He maketh the inquisition for blood He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.”

Similar cases soon appeared further down the tracks in neighbouring Texas. Sitting neatly halfway between New Orleans and Houston, the railroad had changed Lafayette’s fortunes and the Southern Pacific now appeared to be tracing a blood-red line from Cajun country to the Lone Star State. As far as Lake Charles was from Lafayette, Beaumont was from Lake Charles. On 19 February 1912 the bodies of Hattie Dove and her three children were left piled almost naked on the bed, each one slaughtered by axe-blows to the head.

ABOVE A French newspaper, *Le Petit Journal*, picks up on the bloody human sacrifice theme for a report on the axe murders in Louisiana in 1912



SACRIFICE TO THE LOA

FIVE FAMILIES AND NEARLY TWO DOZEN PEOPLE WERE BATTERED TO DEATH IN LOUISIANA

“WERE IT NOT FOR THE GORE, THE GRISTLE AND THE BRAIN SPLATTERED ACROSS THE SHEETS, IT WOULD HAVE APPEARED ALMOST SERENE”

RAYNE

Sacrifices:
11 Nov. 1909



LAFAYETTE

Sacrifices:
25 Feb. 1911



LAFAYETTE

Sacrifices:
26 Nov. 1911



LAKE CHARLES

Sacrifices:
20 Jan. 1912



CROWLEY

Sacrifices:
31 Jan. 1911



Unlike the others though, Hattie Dove had put up a fight, and there were signs of struggle in the shack. According to *The Beaumont Enterprise*, “furniture had been overturned and the bed cloths had been torn from the bed, while blood was everywhere.”

In April 1912 the Cassaway family were killed in their bed in San Antonio, Texas. Nothing was stolen and the bodies had been neatly – almost lovingly – arranged on the linen. Then another family of three, their names unknown, lost their lives in Hempstead, Texas.

The following month, Glidden, Texas, between San Antonio and Houston, awoke to the screams of neighbours and a nocturnal axe murder of its own when Ellen Monroe, her four children and her lodger (and possibly lover, given they shared the same bed) Lyle Funancune were snuffed out while they slept. According to *The Nesbitt Memorial Library Journal*, the bodies were found at 7am by Monroe’s fifth child Parthenia, who lived with her grandmother.

Like Hattie Dove, Ellen Monroe and Lyle Funancune apparently survived the first blow, their bodies found by the

bedside rather than in it, but this was a blip in what was otherwise the grimly reassuring pattern of a serial murder. The case's connection appears purely circumstantial – an axe and a family murdered after dark.

Sheriff Bruce Mayes and a pack of bloodhounds traced the killer's tracks to the home of Jim Fields. That morning, while Parthenia Monroe howled in grief, Fields had washed his shoes and bought rail tickets to Flatonia, Texas, 50 kilometres from Glidden. He was carrying a suspicious quantity of cash, and his jacket was flecked with blood. His recently scrubbed boots matched the prints at the scene perfectly, although the charges were later dismissed.

The fact that this had so nearly been resolved and that Glidden was well out of the previous murder arc was quickly forgotten. To gossips and newsmen alike, it looked as though a pandemic of axe murder was sweeping Texas and Louisiana. Black communities held panicked meetings in courthouses, young black women working as servants began sleeping in their employers' kitchens rather than return home, men began to acquire guns (a further source of anxiety for the white elite) and rig up 'alarm systems' of fishing line connecting door knobs to toes. *The Utica Saturday Globe* reported, "Every cabin door and window is locked and barred and no family sleeps without a guard. Every ax, every piece of iron, everything which might be used as an instrument of murder, is picked up and carried inside."

As a tragic footnote to the hysteria, on 15 April 1912 a young man in Smithville, Texas, rose in the night to stretch his legs and was shot dead by mistake.



ENTER THE AXE-WOMAN

The axe blade swung through the night air of Lafayette again in November 1912, shattering the life out of a family of six while they slept in their three-room shack. Each had been struck behind the right ear with the reverse of the blade, and the bodies were found by the surviving daughter, who by fortune alone had escaped death. The 10 year old had spent the night at her uncle's house. Returning home in heavy rain the next morning, she pushed open the kitchen door and found her father Norbert Randall, her mother, her three siblings and her cousin lying cold in two beds.

Water had made short work of the evidence: the rain outside had obliterating any incriminating tracks, and the murder weapon left inside had been washed clean. Once again, the dogged Sheriff LaCoste pounced on the first available lead, and this time he made an arrest.

A young woman had been found creeping around near the Randall cabin, her blue and white dress covered in blood and brain. Aged between 18 and 20 – her striking stature made it difficult tell – Clementine Barnabet was a folk terror made flesh. She scandalised the press, stirring up a whirlwind of moral panic in a state where the Civil War and slavery remained a living memory. Everything about Clementine Barnabet represented a collision, even a perversion, of cultures in the eyes of white Louisiana, from her mangled Creole French and mixed bloodline (newspaper reports described her as "only one-eighth [black]") to her mangled beliefs – a tabloid-baiting blend of Voodoo (itself a blend of Catholicism and West African tribal rites) and evangelical Christianity.

BELOW-LEFT The site of the Glidden axe murder, pictured in 1912

BELOW-RIGHT A 1916 recreation of the Villisca axe murders



Initially protesting her innocence, she later admitted that she had killed the Randall family with accomplices, but only because they wanted to “try out” a Voodoo charm (acquired from the splendidly named ‘Hoodoo doctor’ Joseph Thibodeaux) that they believed would protect them. But the story was changed a third time, with the axe woman claiming her father was the real killer. Then the story changed a fourth and final time when she took the stand: she absolved her father and saved him from a death sentence. The resulting circus of the grotesque produced by this final harrowing narrative made headlines across the US and the world.

If Louis LaCoste had run a reasonably even-handed investigation, the trial in Lafayette Parish Courthouse was anything but. In a sensational article (its language edited here for modern sensibilities), Ohio’s *Mahoning Dispatch* reported: “With screams of hysterical laughter the girl rocked back and forth in the witness chair, her great eyes rolling into the back of her head, barely any pupil showing. Amidst sharp commands from the court and quick questioning of the prosecutor, the woman told of how, because the Randall family had refused to obey church orders, she had crept upon their cabin late on Sunday night with a keen-edged axe concealed in the folds of her cotton wrapper.

“She told of how, after she had thrown open the door of the tiny cabin, she crept upon the sleeping husband and wife and before either could arouse had split their skulls in twain with her death-dealing implement. She told how the four [children] on the floor started to cry out and how stealthy tread she approached their trundle beds and swinging her axe killed two with one blow and then lay about her with quick swings hacking the bodies of the two remaining

children until they were scattered in bits about the room. As she completed the awful tale, she rocked to and fro and then said: ‘An’ judge, thet ain’t all either.’”

The report went on: “The girl continued to tell of how, when a family by the name of Andrus living in an isolated section of the parish near the Mississippi river had refused to obey the message from God – supposed to be the utterings of a Voodoo doctor who had been seen in this district – she with other religiously crazed [black] fanatics went to the Andrus cabin in the dead of night and there with axes hacked the sleeping members, four in number, to pieces, ending their bloody orgy with weird prayers and incantations.”

For all its jaw-dropping unreality, the key points of this horror story stacked up. Norbert Randall was the brother-in-law of Alexandre Andrus, and both families had been present at the Church of Sacrifice. The murders themselves took place on Sunday nights, as *The Harford Herald* speculated at the time, “presumably after the [worshippers] had worked themselves into a religious frenzy at their meetings.”



THE NECKBONE'S CONNECTED TO THE...

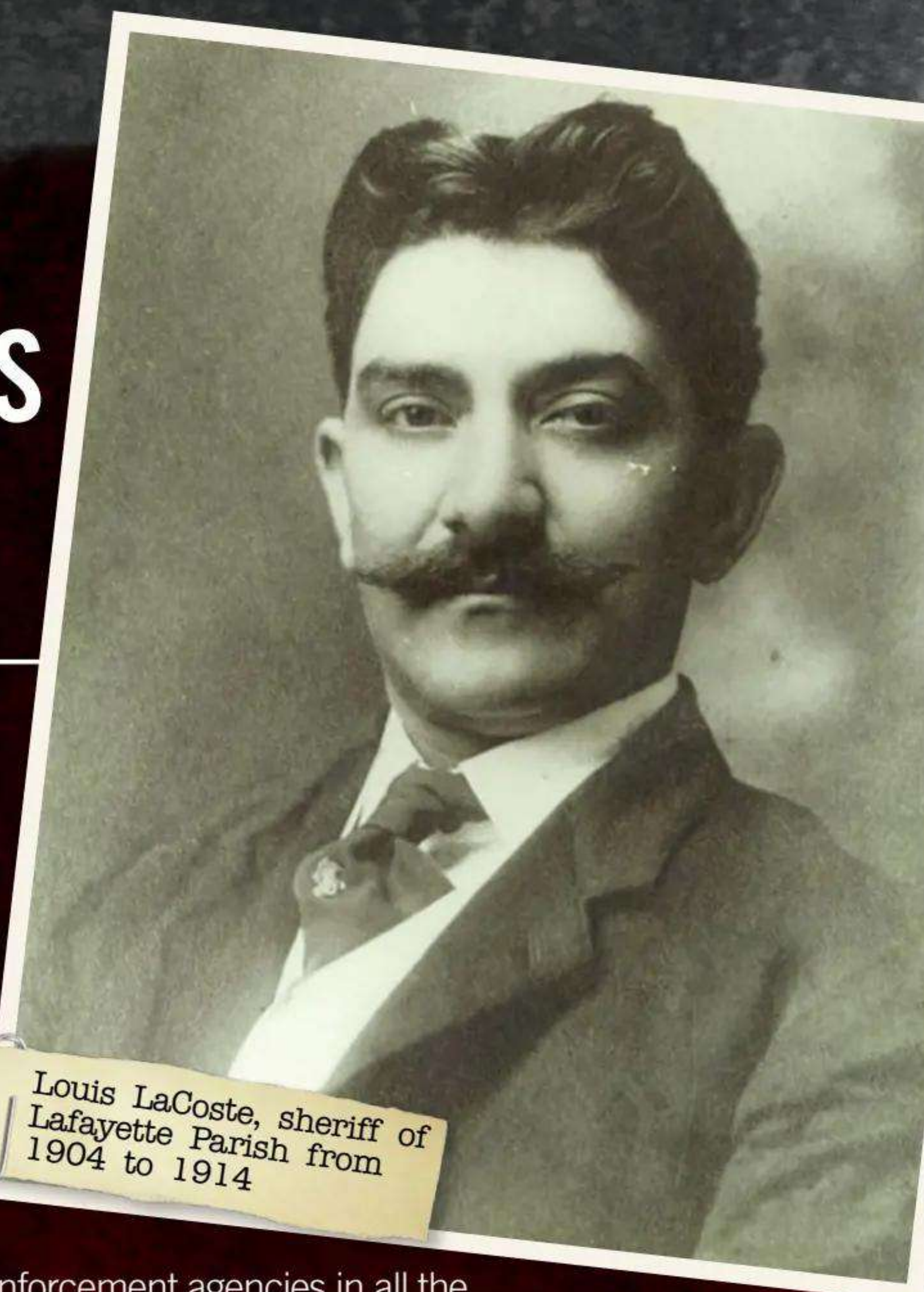
IT DIDN'T TAKE TOO LONG FOR POLICE TO JOIN THE DOTS, BUT UNPICKING THE WHO AND WHY OUT OF RUMOUR AND SUPPOSITION WAS TRICKY

The links between the Lafayette victims and the membership of Clementine Barnabet to a religious group were compelling enough that a number of

preachers were picked up by various law enforcement agencies in all the jurisdictions involved. The church's leader Reverend King Harris was questioned too, but accounts of Harris remain strangely elusive, as do the rumoured links between the Sacrifice Sect and the Voodoo cults of New Orleans.

This religious dimension, as well as the reference to a “Human Five” spurred on theories that the Human Five referred to either the number of victims (that for various reasons weren't always five) or a sect-within-a-sect that was carrying out the church's bloody mission. This mission? A number of news reports paint the slayings as a ritual to grant immortality (tying them to blood-drinking Voodoo rites), but another rumour that gained currency was that the victims were all mixed race, and this was anathema to the church, which sought to purify the flock. This was somewhat tenuously backed up by an underlined passage in a Bible belonging to one of the Sacrifice Sect preachers who found himself briefly under lock and key: “And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

This is plausible to a point, but it ignores the fact that Barnabet herself was of mixed heritage, as indeed were many Louisiana Creole people. Perhaps she was ‘purifying’ herself through bloodshed, but to take that line is to pile supposition upon supposition.



Louis LaCoste, sheriff of Lafayette Parish from 1904 to 1914





That Barnabet had directed the murders that she didn't participate in accounted at least for the differences in execution, from the neat surgical bludgeoning to the brutal bloodletting. And it also accounted for the fact that the murders continued after her arrest.

COPYCATS, CHURCHES AND CONSPIRACIES

Some posit that these were copycat crimes designed to exonerate Barnabet, but that seems unlikely. After all, she had confessed and been found with blood-drenched clothes in her possession. Others suggest that Barnabet wasn't involved at all and was merely a fantasist fitted up by a justice system only too eager to close this grisly chapter in Lafayette's history, or a fanatic taking the fall for her faith. But her story does fit with the established facts. While much of her depiction in the press was a predictably heavy-handed blend of bigotry, misandry and credulity, take away the Voodoo charms and tignon head-dress (fashionable among Creole women, it was linked to Voodoo thanks to the likes of Marie Laveau) and Clementine Barnabet remains an eerie, intimidating presence.

Albert Dickinson, an otherwise measured reporter from the *Utica Saturday Globe*, visited Barnabet in her jail cell and was instantly disquieted by the woman he found sitting on the floor humming an unknown hymn. "[She] stood to greet me with a grin of delighted anticipation," he reported, and the experience left such an impact on the newsman that he left no record of what they discussed. He was more than happy to recall his chats with the occupants of neighbouring cells, however.

But the logical interpretation of the evidence, confession and circumstance was dwarfed by the lingering mysteries. Of the church itself, little is certain. That its name was alternately written as Sacrifice Sect, Sect of Sacrifice, Sanctified Sect of the Sacrifice Church, and God Sacrifice Church, suggests that few journalists ever managed to really get a handle on what it was about, conjuring up images of a revival tent that simply pulled up the stakes and left town long before the deputies showed up.

The Auckland Star in New Zealand (the undoubted second-hand nature of the information casting scepticism on the veracity of their account) reported, "[Men] who have attended the church say that their sermons are nothing short of appeals to passion, frenzied shooting taking place, many people, overcome with wild zeal, rolling on the floor naked." The church disbanded soon after the murders, taking all hope of clarity with it and forcing contemporary investigators to cast the net wider.

THE AXE-MEN HIT THE ROAD?

More outlandish theories lay blame at the door of the jazz-loving Ax-Man of New Orleans, responsible for a series of brutal attacks between May 1918 and October 1919. However, six years is a heck of a 'cooling off' period for a serial killer, and his MO was altogether different. These were rage attacks. The Ax-Man attacked predominantly Italian-American couples, smashing down their doors to gain entry and, most tellingly, left survivors by accident rather than design. Frenzies are careless, they don't leave much time for delicately rearranging corpses, daubing psalms on walls or jamming splints between the fingers of children.



Marie Laveau, the Voodoo queen of New Orleans, wearing a tignon

“FRENZIES ARE CARELESS, THEY DON'T LEAVE MUCH TIME FOR DELICATELY REARRANGING CORPSES, DAUBING PSALMS ON WALLS OR JAMMING SPLINTS BETWEEN THE FINGERS”

comment? Come to that, how was he able to creep around black neighbourhoods in the Deep South after dark without eliciting notice?

All of these theories do of course ignore the vital matter of Clementine Barnabet and raise as many fresh questions as they offer answers.

The real death toll is enshrouded in mystery, as murky and folkloric as the beliefs that inspired it. Some journalists recorded that as many as 300 may have been slain by the sect in its various guises over a six-year period, drawing a veil of terror down on the black townships of Louisiana and Texas and bringing the beat of Voodoo drums into the ashen-faced conversations of a middle and upper class that would sooner forget its black neighbours even existed.

How many deaths were actually down to the will of this mysterious cult and how many of these were down to Barnabet specifically will never be clear. Nor will we ever know how many unrelated crimes in Texas and Louisiana were bundled in with the case. The different jurisdictions and the absence of modern forensics saw to that, with the opium of gossip and hearsay soon dousing all further flickers of truth.

Flanked by three white sheriff's deputies at her trial, Barnabet howled, “I am the axe-woman of the Sacrifice Sect. I killed them all, men, women and babies, and I hugged the babies to my breast, but I am not a murderer.”

It's a clear confession, yet it ends with a scorpion sting of ambiguity that seemingly went unquestioned.

Sentenced to life imprisonment and entombed in infamy as America's first black female serial killer, her legacy is a tidy solution to a tale that is anything but.

The peerless Todd C. Elliot, whose *Axes of Evil: The True Story of the Ax-Man Murders* was an invaluable resource for this article, posits that Lyn George Jacklin Kelly may have been responsible.

Entering true crime infamy for the Villisca axe murders in June 1912, Kelly entered the Moore family home while its inhabitants slept and carved them up. He left the axe at the scene and skipped town on a train. The dates work, but there's a big geographical gap between the murders in Louisiana and Texas and Kelly's crime in Iowa.

While the Lafayette murders were strange, Villisca was stranger – the victims' faces were covered with gauze and the mirrors in the house covered with bedclothes. When he eventually confessed, his motives were religious mania – he worked as a Presbyterian preacher, using his position of trust to pick his victims. Some of his flock even recall him preaching about “blood sacrifice”. That fits with the Louisiana/Texas murders, but only to a point.

The problems are many and commonalities do not always equal causation. A religious element links the two, yes, as do elaborate ritualistic killings, but these killings are so different, both in terms of Villisca's white victims and the precise ‘dressing’ of the Villisca crime scene that speaks of a very specific urge that Kelly was busy working on through his axe handle.

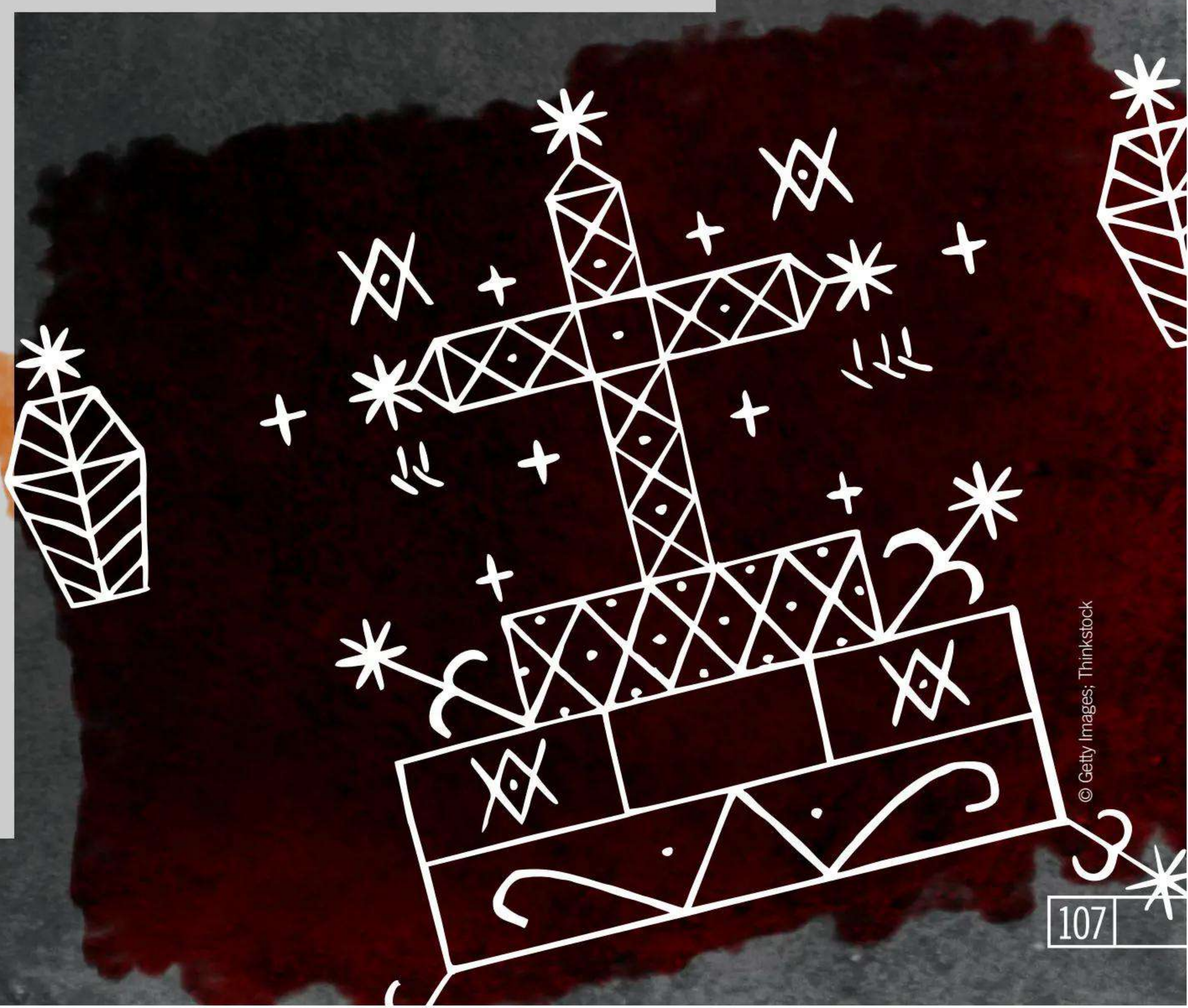
While the Louisiana and Texas axe murders – and the New Orleans ones, for that matter – were break-ins, Kelly waited patiently in the Moore attic for the family to return and head to bed. Granted, this wasn't an option in the two or three-room shacks of Rayne, Crowley and co, but it suggests a great deal of thought and planning.

Perhaps more importantly: how was a white English-born Presbyterian preacher (and one-time chaplain to the New Jersey Ku Klux Klan) able to team up with a black evangelical/Voodoo church without anyone passing

OPPOSITE Clementine Barnabet, pictured in 1912

OPPOSITE-INSET The spate of brutal axe murders were attributed to the mystical beliefs of a fringe religious sect trying to enact a ritual, perhaps to protect themselves from evil. Burning incense is a less gruesome, method believed to ward off evil. Louisiana Voodoo is a blend of Catholicism and West African rites

BELOW A Voodoo veve or symbol for the Loa (spirit) Baron Samedi, a loa of the dead





FOLIE À MUR-DEUX

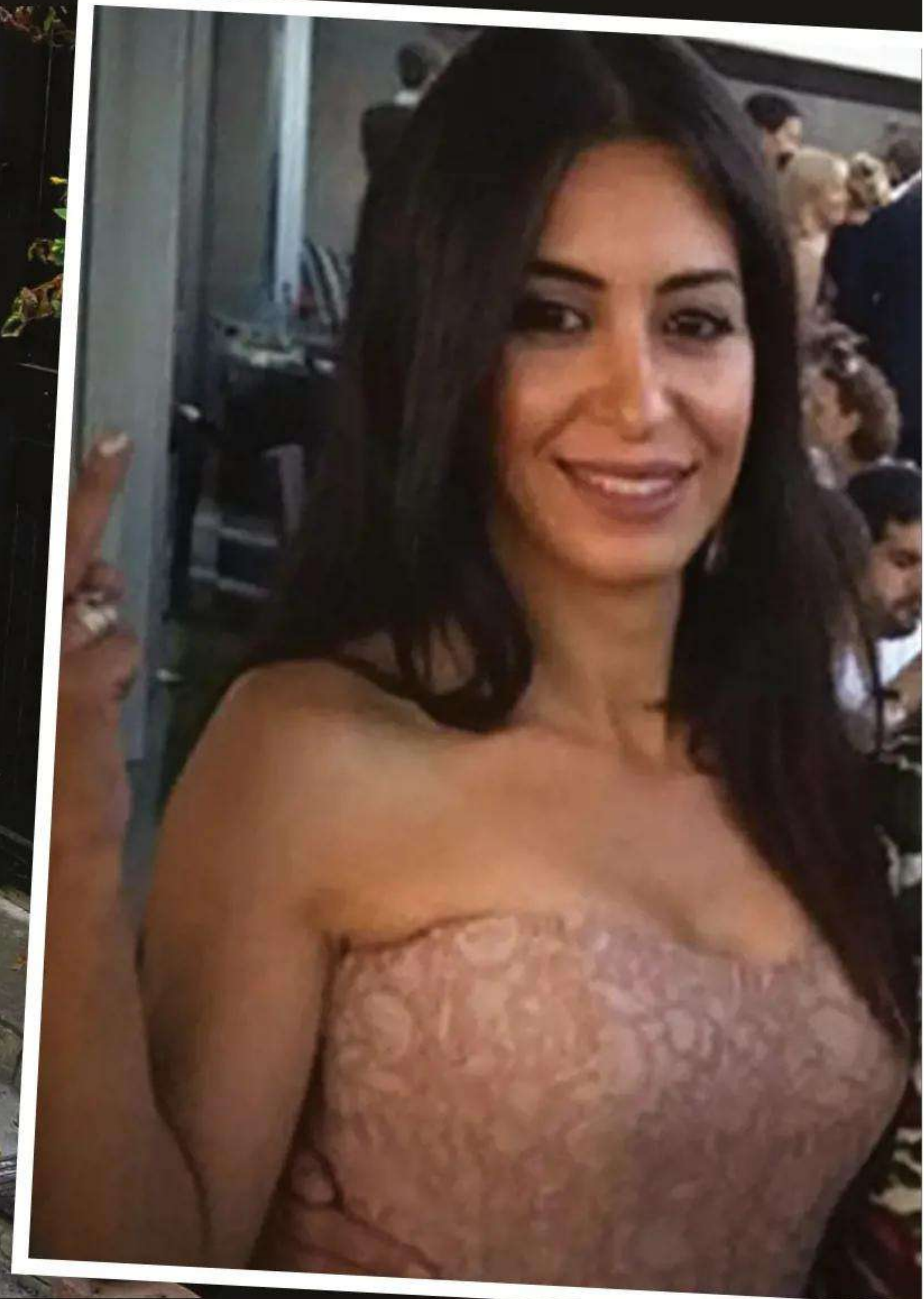
A RARE CASE OF SHARED PSYCHOSIS LED TO THE SENSATIONAL MURDER OF AN INNOCENT AU PAIR: WHY DIDN'T SOPHIE LIONNET ESCAPE THE CLUTCHES OF HER CRAZED EMPLOYERS?

WORDS TANITA MATTHEWS

On the afternoon of 20 September 2017, emergency services were called to a southwest London home after receiving a concerned call from a neighbour reporting a vast plume of smoke and a foul odour emitting from a nearby garden. At the Wimbledon Park Road property, firefighters found Ouissem Medouni poking at chicken thighs on a small barbecue on the patio, while a charred mass burned on a bonfire nearby. When asked what he was burning, Medouni claimed he was “cooking a sheep”, but after the blaze was put out, something in the ashes caught the fireman’s eye: first it was some clothing, then a glint of jewellery, then a nose, and then what appeared to be fingers. Asked why he was burning a body, Medouni simply answered, “It’s a sheep”, his eyes cast down. Firefighters noticed Medouni’s demeanour shift as he watched them eyeing up the suspicious charcoaled lump beside him.

Their disbelief at his answer was obvious: “Bollocks” the firefighter exclaimed. Police were called, and they arrested Medouni and his partner Sabrina Kouider on suspicion





ABOVE Firefighters found Medouni barbecuing on the patio after a neighbour called emergency services, concerned about the smoke and “weird smell” coming from the garden. Sophie’s body was being burned just next to him

ABOVE-RIGHT Kouider made dozens of allegations against her famous ex-boyfriend Mark Walton, none of which were ever found to have any basis for a charge to be filed against him. She insisted police weren’t taking her seriously enough

RIGHT Sabrina Kouider (left) and Ouissem Medouni (right) met in 2001 in Paris. Their relationship was volatile and temperamental but Kouider’s delusions sparked a murder plot that would see them both convicted

of murder. As suspected, it wasn’t a sheep Medouni was cremating. What detectives found to be causing the foul odour was the body of 21-year-old French national Sophie Lionnet, a nanny hired by the couple 18 months earlier.

As British and French tabloids devoured the sensational details of the slaying, the chilling account of what occurred inside the Southfields property formed a bizarre tapestry of a murder plot hatched by Kouider and Medouni, which was dubbed “stranger than fiction”.

FEMME FATALE

The remains in the couple’s garden were so badly burned, investigators were initially unable to determine the age or gender of the victim. Although it was Medouni who had been at the crime scene, investigators were eager to find out what his partner knew – perhaps she could provide valuable information about Medouni’s crime.

Inside London’s Metropolitan Police interrogation rooms, Kouider, unaware that police elsewhere would soon learn the identity of the body in their back garden, tried to convince investigators that her au pair of 18 months had recently run off with Kouider’s former boyfriend, a founding member of Irish boy band Boyzone, who was now living in the US and working as a music mogul. Messages in Kouider’s phone from barely a week before showed her discussing with a friend how the au pair had gone back to France. Something didn’t add up.

When presented with the evidence that Sophie wasn’t hundreds of kilometres away across the English Channel and had in fact been the centerpiece of a macabre bonfire

burning just metres away from their back door, the narrative to Kouider’s defence changed. Kouider now blamed Medouni for her death. However, inside a separate interrogation room, Medouni was pointing the finger at Kouider. The balding, middle-aged financial analyst revealed that Kouider had become obsessed with the idea that their nanny was conspiring with her ex-boyfriend against her, and that he was

led to believe that the Troyes native they had hired back in 2016 was a spy for her former lover. What’s more, Medouni told investigators the shy au pair had been seduced into gathering damning information on Kouider, and was also sent to drug and sexually assault young girls in the couple’s family home.

It was an odd set of accusations, and when investigators looked into the couple they slowly built a picture of the dysfunctional, volatile and potentially deadly relationship – and discovered some clues as to why a job looking after their children went so wrong for Sophie.

Images of Kouider show a beautiful young woman with soft skin, an even sweeter smile and luscious locks of cascading ebony hair. She was a fashion designer,

something she clearly had a passion for based on her taste in fine clothes, rich fabrics and bold colours that hung from her lithe frame. However, her good looks were deceiving. Details of Kouider’s life alluded to psychological instability.

She had been born in Algeria but had moved to Paris with her mother as a young girl. It was there, in 2001, while working on a sweet stall at the age of 18 that she first caught the eye of fellow French Algerian ‘Sam’ Medouni. Although he was five years her senior, he keenly pursued the beautiful young woman. It was the beginning of a turbulent and bizarre 17-year, on-off relationship.



LIES AND DECEIT

AS SOPHIE STARVED AND COWERED INSIDE THEIR HOME, KOUIDER TRIED TO CONSTRUCT A NARRATIVE TO FRIENDS TO EXCUSE HER EVENTUAL DISAPPEARANCE

15 SEPTEMBER 2017

Hey (*name omitted*) how are you? Does your au pair have any friends that would like to come and work for us?

I'm all out of options and would rather have one person that I can develop into the role. They will get travel opportunities and great benefits (*smile emoji*) (*heart emoji*)

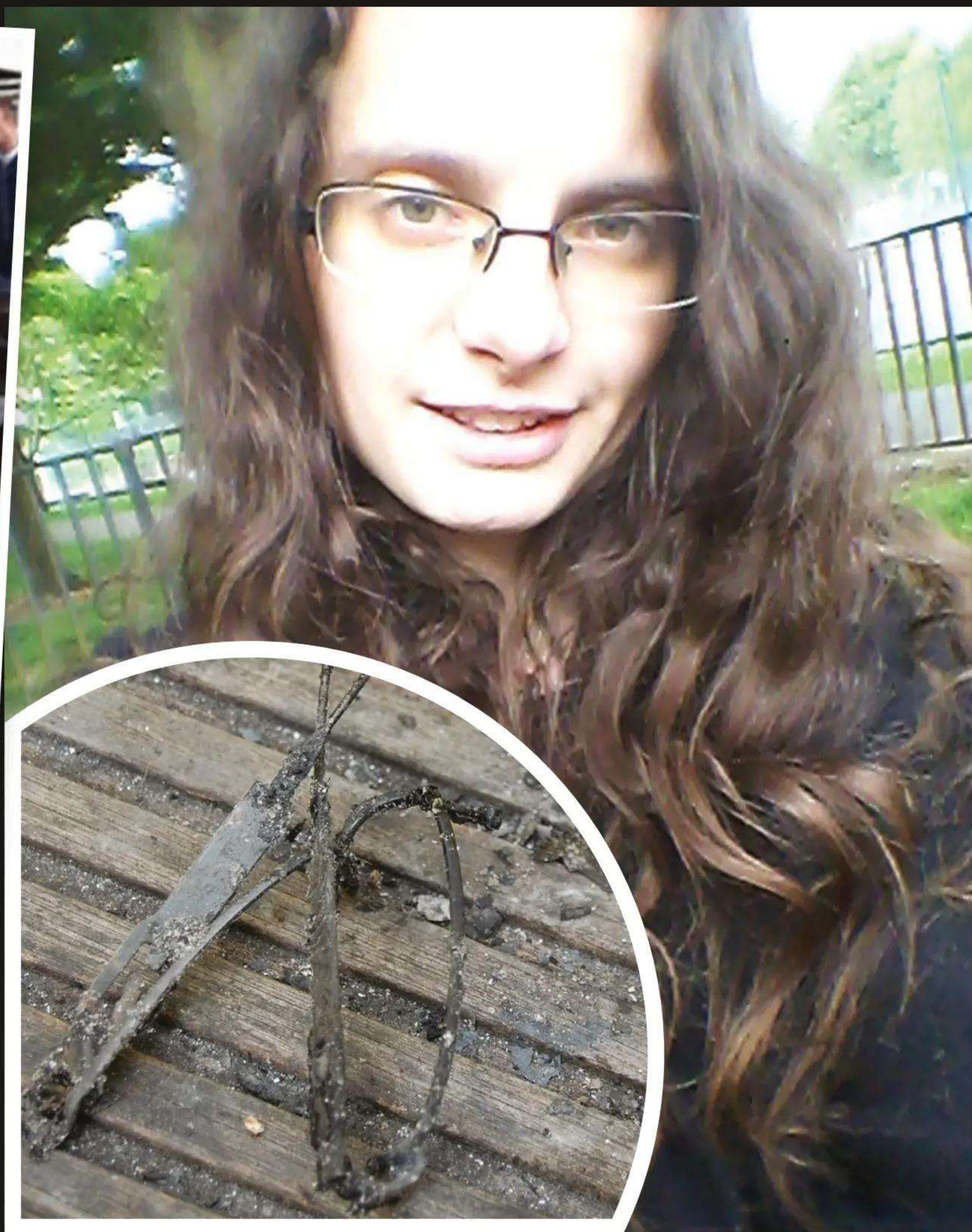
Hi hun, I'm afraid no and I don't have a nanny anymore she's back to France honey give you advice pls pls pls don't let your little (*name omitted*) with any stranger please everything can wait! Tc lots of love (*heart emoji*) (*heart emoji*) (*heart emoji*)

(*angel emoji*) (*angel emoji*) (*angel emoji*) (*angel emoji*)

Hey honey, sound like it didn't end well then v(:/ *emoji*)

I wanted someone to cook, clean, tidy, walk dog and feed animals etc. I wasn't going to leave (*name omitted*) with anyone, only in my presence. They might play with her occasionally while I make a call occasionally. My parents still come home ed sometimes and I can always do things at the weekend/evenings (:/ *emoji*)

In 2011, while visiting a Notting Hill bank, she crossed paths with charismatic Irishman Mark Walton, a founding member of the popular 1990s Irish group Boyzone. Mark instantly fell in love with Kouider. However, it wasn't long before the outwardly "gentle, sweet, loving" Kouider became, as he described, "crazy". He recalled how Kouider had an unstable and unpredictable streak to her character that would appear in an instant. Her temper was triggered at the slightest provocation, and within seconds she could become "quite scary". During their two-year relationship, Kouider had been "abusive" and "exhibited a manipulative and controlling nature" with a "calculating streak", according to Mark, who split with Kouider in 2013. On 16 July 2012, she reported a "crazy argument" to police and accused him of cheating. They resumed their relationship days later, but by



ABOVE Sophie's charred body was barely identifiable. Only traces of her existence still existed in the fire, including her burnt spectacles

Despite the fact that an Islamic marriage certificate certified their union as husband and wife, they outwardly lacked the typical relationship dynamics that a husband and wife would share. Prosecutors would later summarise that the relationship was one of 'convenience' for Kouider, who as well as being jealous, highly temperamental and violent, only dated Medouni until something better came along – he was simply a meal ticket for her when she was lonely, in need or had exhausted the goodwill of her lovers. When she strayed to other men, as she did often, Medouni feverishly waited for her to return. On the flip-side, Medouni was deemed as 'punching above his weight' when it came to the beautiful but ultimately deadly Kouider, but it appeared that he desperately loved her. Did this desperation to hold onto her mean he had been sucked in by her delusions, and had ultimately killed Sophie out of loyalty to Kouider?

When Kouider announced that she was moving to London to pursue a career as a nanny, Medouni followed. In England's capital, she became part of a selling scheme for a telecommunications company while he eventually earned a degree in economics and found a job with a French bank.

“ MEDOUNI TOLD INVESTIGATORS THE SHY AU PAIR HAD BEEN SEDUCED INTO GATHERING DAMNING INFORMATION ON KOUIDER ”

SOPHIE'S CHOICE

IN A STRANGE GOOD COP/BAD COP ROUTINE, MEDOUNI AND KOUIDER'S EXHAUSTING EIGHT-HOUR INTERROGATION OF SOPHIE BEFORE SHE DIED WAS UNINTELLIGIBLE

MEDOUNI: Sit properly. You needn't be scared. OK?

KOUIDER: Exactly! OK? Because, earlier on, you were crying and said to me, "I did something very serious, and I am very ashamed of myself". That's what you told me. Yes, or no?

MEDOUNI: And what's that?

KOUIDER: Is it lie?

MEDOUNI: What's that?

KOUIDER: Is it a lie?

LIONNET (*sounding scared and maybe in tears*): I was scared!

KOUIDER: You were scared? You were scared? You lie as you breathe, because... why did I scare you? Did I scare you?"

LIONNET: I was scared.

KOUIDER: What were you scared of? Scared of what? Scared of what? Because I was very, very, very nice to you! I was very, very, very, very, very nice to you!

MEDOUNI: Stop shouting like this! Go on! Scared of what?

KOUIDER: Scared of what? I had been too nice to her. I used to even tell her things...

MEDOUNI: She said she was scared of you! Stop it, please! We...

KOUIDER: What were scared of? OK. Sorry! Apologies!

MEDOUNI: Scared of what?

LIONNET: I don't know exactly.

KOUIDER: Scared of what? In any case, whether you speak or you don't speak, at your trial, you will do so. You will be jailed. Because as far as I am concerned, I am not going to joke with you! OK? Because, I am a nice person, OK? I'd really like to help you. You too must help me! OK? If you want me to help you, you need to help me! OK? You want us to help you? Then help us! OK?

...

KOUIDER: I don't think he abused you; you wanted it because he couldn't do that with you. And whenever you come back to the house, I smell sex.

MEDOUNI: ...she smells sex.

KOUIDER: I smell it. I smell it. Where the house? Hurry up, where is the house? Hurry up hurry up, otherwise I will fucking make the call. Hurry up where is the house? Open your mouth, where is the house?

...

KOUIDER: Open your fucking mouth. Where is the house? You don't to say it. You don't want to it. So you want to go to prison? Be ready it is either 40 years in prison or you leave. It is up to you. You have the choice. Think carefully about 40 years in prison. Close your eyes for one minute OK and imagine yourself every day in a cage like an animal with other people inside. That's not a laughing matter. With paedophiles and all the...

(*Continuous banging noise in the background*)

KOUIDER: If you promise to tell me the truth and I later find out that it's lie, I will not protect you. No more lies, I will not protect you, I swear on my life, Sophie. I will not allow any more lie.

MEDOUNI: So, he asked you when you will be coming back. That's the way he approached you. He doesn't know you but sent a message through Facebook asking you when will you be coming back? It doesn't make any sense.

KOUIDER: So he knew you.

LIONNET: No.

KOUIDER: Yes, he knew you because he asked you when you will be coming back. He knew you. Please just say the truth and nothing apart the truth.

MEDOUNI: You better know that we will not let you go back until we know the whole, whole, whole, whole truth and nothing but the truth. It's up to you.

...

KOUIDER: Tell me, huh! Tell me. Do you know this girl? Do you know this girl? I am just asking. Do you know her?... (*Inaudible*) He was with you, even the best of the best, they are going to be checked, OK. Do you know this girl? Because there is everywhere CCTV. Do you know this girl?

LIONNET: No.



the end of October, after they had split up again, she claimed he had been violent three times during their two-year relationship. None of the allegations against him were ever found to be true. Mark admitted he knew of her unstable mental health, an issue that had previously resulted in at least one attempted suicide.

Although their relationship was over, Mark still had some residual feelings towards Kouider, and as an act of kindness continued to pay her rent, gave her an allowance and paid for nannies for her children. But Kouider continued her slanderous campaign against her ex. In total, Kouider reported him to the police as many as 30 times between 2012 and 2017. After they split up, she complained about 60 voicemails he had left her, but none of them contained threatening language. A few months later, in March 2014, she claimed she had been "hacked" by her ex-partner, but "nasty" emails instead were apologies and full of sweet, loving words. The following month, Kouider was found "very agitated, kicking and screaming" outside her Wimbledon Park Road home. She claimed her former lover had been "using black magic to control her and there was nothing she could do about it".

No charges against Mark were filed, although Kouider repeatedly complained to police that they were not taking her allegations seriously. In July she told police he had hacked her Facebook account and breached a non-molestation order. Claims against him in September 2015 included accusations that he was a paedophile. Kouider was given a warning by police about the false allegations she was making against her former partner. In March 2016 she reported he had sexually molested her cat. She didn't have a cat.

This wasn't just a case of one toxic relationship – another of Kouider's ex-boyfriends described her as a "lunatic, fickle and unstable". Every time her relationships ceased, Medouni was there to slot back into the picture. Describing the couple in the aftermath of their crime, one neighbour reportedly said, "They seemed quite normal, but they always do."

“OVER THE MONTHS PEOPLE SAW HER LESS AND LESS, AND WHEN THEY DID THEY REALISED HOW SKINNY SHE WAS BECOMING”

LEFT At the age of 23, Medouni (right) met Kouider (left) in Paris. She was five years his junior. While he was smitten, she only saw him as a meal ticket

BELOW-LEFT As well as confiscating Sophie's passport and identity card, Kouider and Medouni also stashed her suitcase in their shed in the hopes of removing any trace of her after her death

BELOW-RIGHT A still image, taken from the 'confessional' tape Kouider and Medouni had made on 18 September 2017, shows Sophie's gaunt and fragile frame. Within hours she was dead

obsession with her former partner had begun to spiral out of control once again. At some stage in 2017, Kouider had begun to suffer delusions that Sophie was conspiring with her former lover. Although her au pair had never met the man who lived thousands of kilometres away, this didn't satisfy Kouider. Sharing her suspicions with Medouni, he too became an ardent believer in Kouider's delusions.

This shared belief in a delusion is what psychologists have come to know as 'folie à deux', or 'madness of two'. Coined in the 19th century by French psychiatrists Charles Lasègue and Jean-Pierre Falret, it is now a recognised disorder and a part of the *DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition)*.

Together, Medouni and Kouider became obsessed with interrogating Sophie, and confiscated her identity card, passport and suitcase. The couple stopped paying her and even stopped feeding her, subjecting her to brutal and demeaning interrogations over her 'spy' status. Kouider's irrational behaviour refused to subside. Three months before Sophie's death, Mark's financial support for Kouider stopped, and she again launched a vicious attack against him. She marched Sophie down to Lavender Hill Police Station so that she could 'confess' to plotting with her ex to shoot her family. Instead Sophie told officers the allegations were untrue and that she had never met the person Medouni and Kouider were accusing her of co-conspiring with.

This incident was only weeks before Sophie's charred remains were discovered. Why didn't she run? Young, inexperienced and in a strange country, it seems as though

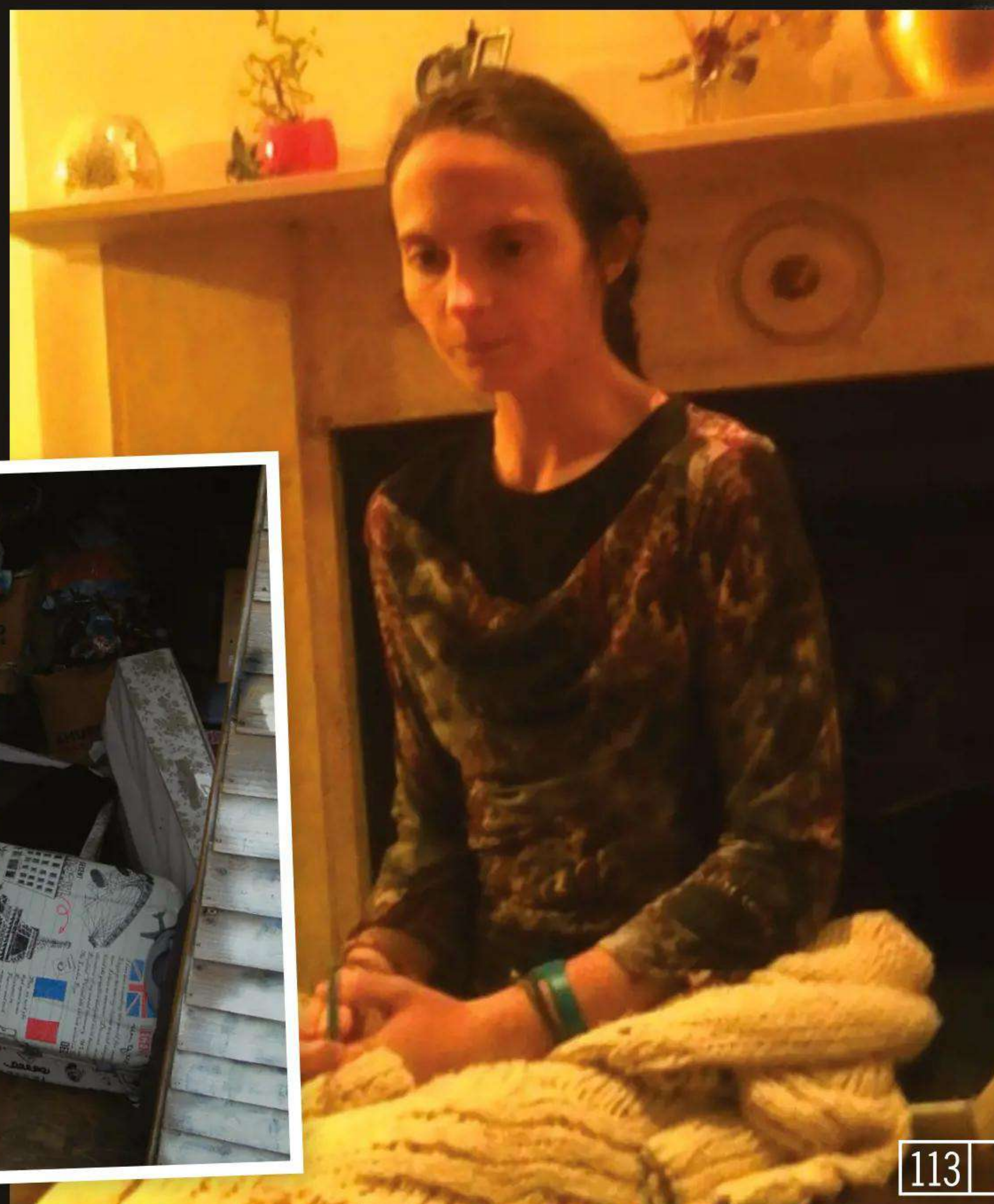
STRANGER THAN FICTION

It was in 2015 that Sophie had first been introduced to her employers and, ultimately, her killers. Kouider's brother, who knew Sophie back in her hometown in France where she lived with her family, had introduced her to the pair and put her forward as a potential nanny for the couple, who were seeking an au pair for their three-year-old daughter and six-year-old son. In January 2016, only a few days after her 20th birthday, Sophie had flown to the neighbouring country's capital to live with Medouni and Kouider.

For Sophie, taking care of the pair's children was the first job she had ever taken on. The couple paid her £50 a week and provided her with a room in their home. Sophie's employment with the French nationals had begun without a hitch, but after working for the pair for a few months, residents in the neighborhood began to notice Sophie's attitude change, and she became increasingly withdrawn.

Behind closed doors she was criticised for being 'lazy'. Already a shy individual who was still learning English, she became almost timid as the temperament of her employers changed for the worse. Speaking to British tabloid *The Daily Mail* after her murder, one of Sophie's friends described how the young woman "found it very difficult" living in London. Over a series of months people saw her less and less, and when they did they realised how skinny she was becoming. A fish and chip shop owner found it odd that she commented how she was not being fed by the couple and seemed to wolf down the fatty flakes of fish and potato she sometimes ordered. This was only weeks before she was discovered dead. She expressed to people that she wanted to return to France, even asking her mother to send her £40 so she could afford the fare back across the channel. But she never made it home.

What was never realised by any of the neighbours until after Sophie's death was that Kouider's



“RESEMBLING A PRISONER OF WAR, SOPHIE QUIETLY SPOKE TO CONFIRM SHE CONSPIRED WITH KOUIDER’S FORMER PARTNER”

Sophie was unable to escape the clutches of her employers. One neighbour later testified that the au pair fled to her house when one incident at the Wimbledon Park Road residence became particularly hostile. Kouider had stormed round to the house and demanded that the young woman return, flying off the handle and scaring everyone in the house into submission. This glimpse at the domineering power Kouider had over the young Frenchwoman is perhaps why Sophie felt she could never escape.

The most damning piece of evidence against the couple came in video format, filmed on 18 September 2017. It shows an emaciated Sophie with her eyes cast downward, hands folded in her lap, which was covered by a woollen blanket, attempting to warm her fragile, skeletal frame. The video filmed her ‘confessing’ to the allegations made against her by her employers. Resembling a prisoner of war, Sophie quietly spoke only to confirm that she had been conspiring with Kouider’s former partner. It is clear that the frightened woman didn’t quite understand what she was confessing to, but went along with it perhaps in the hope that if she agreed then they would let her go. Within hours she was dead.

Charged with Sophie’s murder at London’s Old Bailey on 12 January 2018, both Kouider and Medouni pleaded not guilty. They admitted to perverting the course of justice by attempting to “dispose of the body of Sophie Lionnet by burning”. Each blamed Sophie’s death on the other. It would be down to a jury to decide who was lying and who, if either, was telling the truth. Throughout their two-month trial, which commenced in March, jurors were privy to every sickening detail about Sophie’s last few hours alive. They were shown a still image of Sophie just two days before

she was found burning at the property, taken from the ‘confessional’ tape her employers said they had intended to serve to police as ‘evidence’ of the sabotage she had plotted with Mark. With her hair tied back into a gentle braid, the au pair’s gaunt frame is evidence of the starvation she had been subjected to. Her blank eyes were the result of the lengthy mental and physical torture she had endured. She was just hours from death and just days from being discovered burning in the back garden.

Eight hours of interrogation between Sophie, Medouni and Kouider were recorded by the pair. The five-man and seven-woman panel listened as the often-incoherent and angry ramblings of the couple press Sophie for information about her attempt to infiltrate the couple’s home and relationship. Afraid and barely able to comprehend the questions being posed to her, Sophie only speaks a handful of times, mostly to say “No”. She doesn’t understand why Medouni and Kouider want her to confess, and maybe even what exactly it is she is supposed to be confessing to, but they threaten her, saying that she will be raped, trapped in England away from her family in France and beaten if she doesn’t comply. She still doesn’t understand exactly what she is supposed to be complying with and who she is supposed to have conspired with. She is tired, broken and afraid – all she wants to do is leave. She doesn’t know she will never be allowed to go free.

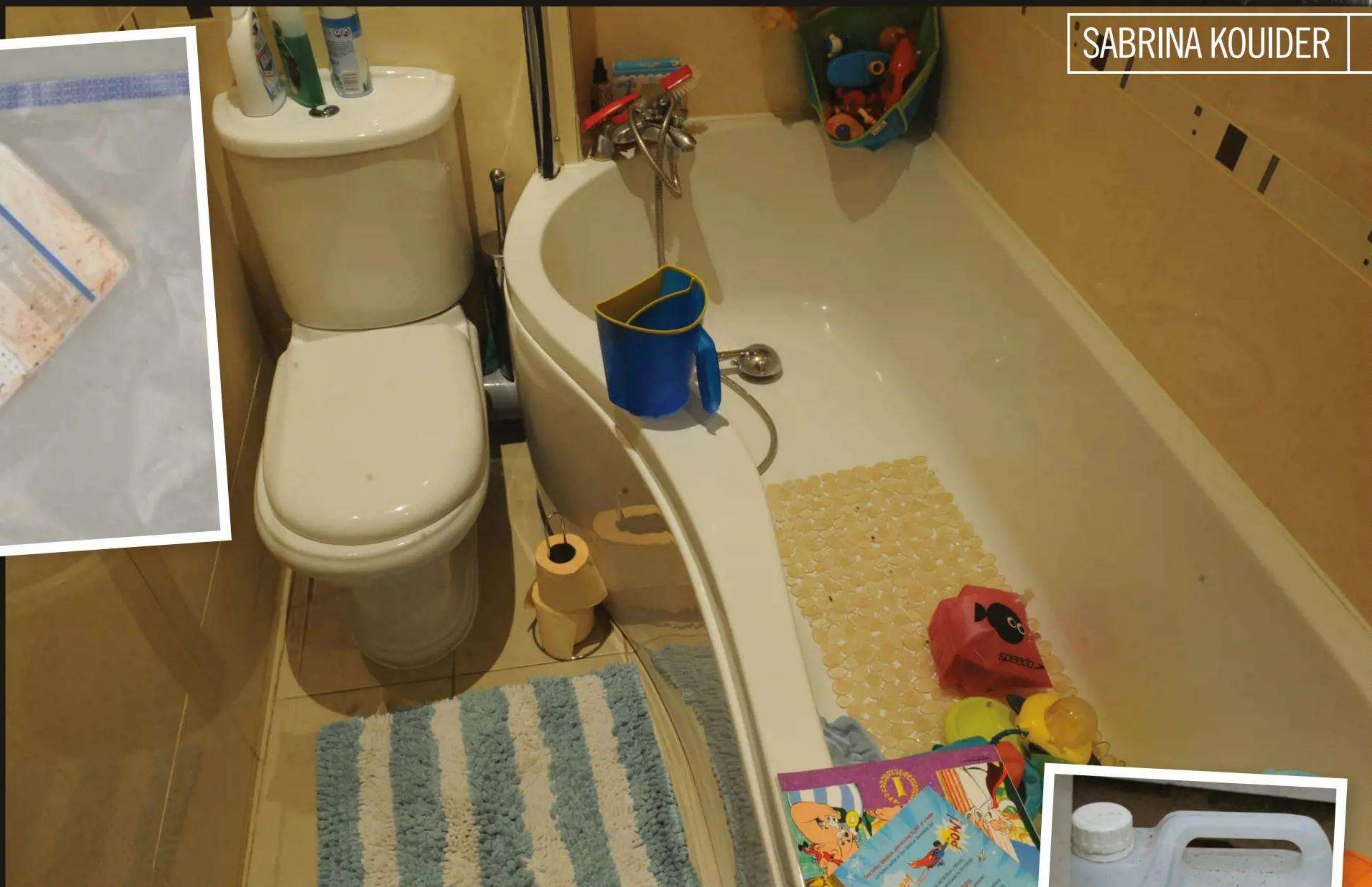
BELOW-LEFT Sophie’s body was so badly burned that a cause of death could not officially be established. However, police suspect that Sophie was drowned in the bathroom of the couple’s home before her body was set alight in the back garden

BELOW-RIGHT After listening to the horrifying details of her daughter’s murder, Sophie’s mother Catherine Devallonne said that her killers had refused to see her worth and should be sentenced to death for the treatment they inflicted on her

“DEAR SOPHIE”

Medouni claimed that he had been asleep when Sophie was killed and that he had been woken in the night by Kouider, who was panic-stricken having killed Sophie. It was a plausible argument, but on the stand a distraught Kouider blamed Medouni for Sophie’s murder. In detail, she described how her partner had water-boarded Sophie in their bathroom and she had drowned. Once he had killed Sophie, Medouni had become aroused, and as Sophie’s lifeless body lay nearby he had forced himself on Kouider and satisfied himself. He





then adjusted himself before instructing her on what they would do next. “Everything I done, I did it for him” she cried. “He wanted to have sex with me. I’m even shocked to talk about it, it’s embarrassing,” she told the court.

Under cross-examination by Medouni’s lawyer Orlando Pownall, Kouider’s claims that Medouni had sex with her were branded “nonsense” and a “figment of your imagination”. Kouider replied, “It’s not my imagination, it’s the truth.” The lawyer said to Kouider, “You say Mr Medouni had never shown any violence towards her [Sophie] prior to September 18, and on that evening he was violent.” He went on to challenge her further: “His defence is almost the mirror image of yours. He says you were the one that had been violent and were violent in the early hours of the 19th.” Kouider, however, denied that she had been the violent one, although she later admitted she had whipped Sophie with an electric cable. The victim’s charred body, which was so badly burned that it could not show a clear cause of death, did reveal that she had five broken ribs and a cracked breastbone from the beatings she was being subjected to in the lead-up to her death.

When Medouni’s lawyer pointed out her past of falsely accusing her partners of wrongdoing, Kouider insisted she had “never made a false accusation” against anyone, but the lawyer continued to point out, “You always blame somebody else for your problems.”

After closing arguments were delivered, jurors were instructed to retire and discuss their verdict, and the judge directed them that he would accept a majority vote in this instance so long as at least 10 of the 12 members agreed. After weeks of deliberations, the decisions had been finalised. As a unanimous guilty verdict against Kouider was delivered she cried hysterically, while Medouni, convicted on a ten to two majority, silently wept and stared down at the floor as the judge announced that he too had been found guilty of murder. The judge commented that the case was a rare instance of “folie à deux” and that the pair had acted without mercy for the victim. Before handing down a sentence,

the judge listened to the defendants’ lawyers and took into account the psychiatric conditions of the couple. Doctors concluded that Kouider was suffering from mental disorders and obsessions, including depression and borderline personality disorder.

In an attempt to demonstrate remorse, Kouider stood in the court and addressed Sophie’s family and the victim herself with a letter titled, “Dear Sophie”. Kouider said, “First of all I wish everyone, including Sophie, especially her parents and family who are suffering badly, to know how deeply sorry I am for what happened to Sophie.” She went on to insist that, “We shared many good times together as well as pains until things went terribly wrong and it ended up in this horrendous tragedy. I think of you every day and I am shocked and sad that you are not part of this world anymore. It feels like a horrible dream to me that I wish I could just wake up from. Every day I live with sadness and sorrow. I am suffering every day thinking of you and what happened to you that dreadful night. I only wish I could turn the clock back so that it never happened and you would still be alive with us today.”

The presiding judge, Nicholas Hilliard, told the pair that they would serve at least 30 years of a life sentence. Kouider was ordered to “return immediately to the hospital” – namely the Bracton Centre, near Dartford, Kent, where she had been held since she was charged with murder. The judge assured Sophie’s mother that there was no truth to the allegations made against her daughter. Addressing Medouni and Kouider, Sophie’s mother, who had sat listening to the final sobs and pleas of her daughter throughout the trial, told the pair, “No god will ever forgive you both for what you have done to our daughter.”

Lawyers acting on Kouider’s behalf appealed against her sentence, claiming that it was too long for someone with mental health issues to serve. Meanwhile, Medouni also made an appeal against his conviction, arguing that it was “unsafe” and that his minimum term was too long. Both their bids for reduced sentences were rejected by senior judges.



TOP-LEFT Among evidence found in Medouni and Kouider’s home, a drug testing kit was discovered in the garden, alluding to the intensity of the interrogations conducted by the pair

TOP-RIGHT One witness testified during the trial that she heard Sophie screaming and splashing in the bathroom the morning of her death, as Kouider and Medouni told her to “breathe”

ABOVE A bottle of patio cleaner was discovered in the vicinity of Sophie’s charred remains. Her killers had intended to cover their tracks and destroy any evidence of her existence



SLNDERMAN

N SACRIFICE

STABBED 19 TIMES BY HER BEST FRIENDS TO APPEASE A FICTIONAL EVIL ENTITY, THE REALITY OF WHAT HAPPENED TO PAYTON LEUTNER IS FIT FOR A HORROR MOVIE

WORDS TANITA MATTHEWS

“Don’t be afraid, I’m only a little kitty cat,” said 12-year-old Morgan Geyser before she pounced on her friend, Payton Leutner, and plunged a 12-centimetre-long blade into her 19 times. The knife punctured her stomach, liver and pancreas and barely missed a vital artery near her heart. “I hate you! I trusted you!” screamed Payton as she tried to escape. But she was disorientated and her vision was becoming blurry; they were in the woods and the trees that concealed the attack were closing in on her. Another girl, Anissa Weier, also 12 years old, took her by the arm and steered Leutner further into the woods so she couldn’t escape and ordered her to lie down. She told her if she did so she would lose less blood.

The two girls then ran in the opposite direction, believing this was the last time anyone would see Leutner alive, and that from this day forth, both girls would have the divine protection of their friend, the Slenderman. Further up ahead, away from their bleeding sacrifice, they sweetly sang to each other.

THREE’S A CROWD

Children often play make-believe. Psychologists deem it a healthy way for them to cope with the changes and transitions in their life as they approach adulthood. But for three girls in a conservative town in Wisconsin, a fantasy game resulted in one of them crawling through the woods, losing a critical volume of blood, while the other two behind bars, charged with attempted first-degree murder.

The girls had all been friends. Geyser and Leutner had known each other since the fourth grade and talked on the phone every night. Weier was a new friend. She and Geyser had started talking on the bus to and from school because they lived in the same housing complex, Sunset Apartments, on Big Bend Road in Waukesha. Weier and Leutner counted Geyser as their closest friend.

At school, Leutner was the social one of the three, while the other girls’ strange behaviour made them outcasts among their peers. The girls would often

play make-believe during their lunch hour, tearing through the canteen, convinced that the dark lord Voldemort from the *Harry Potter* series was after them.

In 2013, their friendship group expanded with the addition of one other member. Weier had introduced Geyser to Slenderman sometime in October. She had encountered him as a secondary character while watching a *Minecraft* video. The faceless and demonic character, well known for his tall and slender appearance, piqued her interest.

From here, she visited the Creepypasta Wiki website, a user-generated fan site dedicated to horror stories, where she found more information on Slenderman and other urban legends in the form of written, Photoshopped and videotaped content. Each one was a tale of the user's 'real' encounter with various monsters and supernatural beings. She began to believe that Slenderman really did exist.

She showed Geyser and the pair became beguiled by his existence. Leutner then heard about Slenderman from Geyser, who apparently taunted her with scary stories about him. Leutner's parents told her the stories were simply fictitious, but she was still frightened by Slenderman. The thralls of fantasy would soon take a frightening turn.

Weier claims Geyser suggested to her around Christmas time that they kill their friend. She had allegedly told her that the two of them should become proxies of Slenderman – his servants – and that in order to do so they had to prove their loyalty to him by killing their friend. This would be their initiation, and if they did it, they would be worthy to stay in his mansion and live their lives alongside him.

So they hatched their insane plan over the next few months, plotting the attack on the school bus, using words such as “cracker” for knife, and “the deed” to refer to the killing. The girls also talked of their escape, calling it their “camping trip”. Their search history on their laptops included “how to get away with murdering someone”. Geyser even told Weier prior to the killing to clear her internet history because, once they killed Leutner, she knew the police would search their computers for evidence.

Their parents were clueless. “You have no idea,” Geyser told police about their plotting, “how difficult it was not to tell anyone.” Weier, however, told police she hadn't wanted to do it but, for fear of losing her only friend, she decided not to let her go it alone. When asked to go over the crucial moment she stabbed her friend again, Geyser retorted: “Are you trying to do this over and over again and see if I tell the

story differently? I have the right not to go into detail about it if I don't want to.”

CHILD'S PLAY

After school on Friday 30 May 2014, Leutner and Geyser were getting ready for a sleepover to celebrate Geyser's 12th birthday. Each year she was allowed to have two friends over, and Weier soon joined them. To kick off the celebrations, the trio headed to Skateland, an indoor roller rink in Waukesha. The party arrived at dinnertime and left at about 9.30pm. Back at Sunset Apartments, the girls messed around on their laptops, laughing and giggling. The scene would look like any normal sleepover.

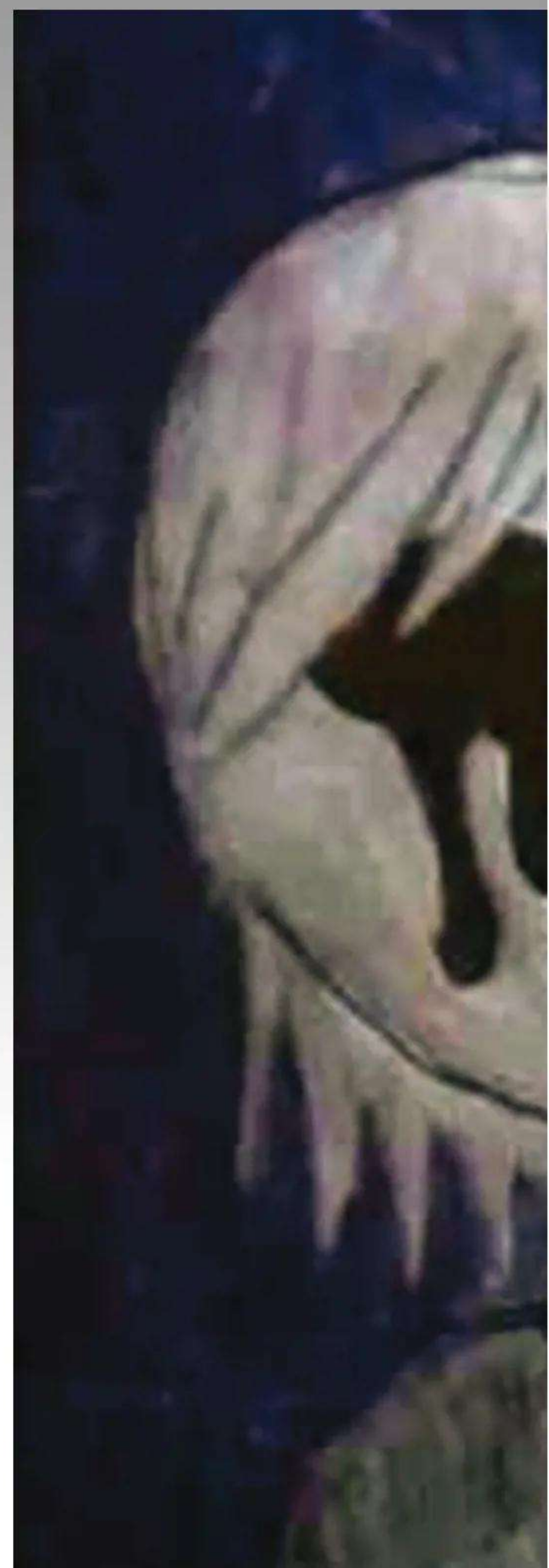
Unknown to Leutner, her 'friends' were planning to wake up at 2am and duct tape her mouth before stabbing her in the neck and covering her body up with a blanket to make it look like she was sleeping. Then they planned to sneak out of the house and head for the Slenderman Mansion. They believed such a place existed deep in the Nicolet National Forest almost 500 kilometres from their homes.

However, for one reason or another, they decided not to do it there and then. When they settled down for the night, Geyser and Weier fell asleep side by side while their third friend lay across the head of the bed. Weier recalled how Leutner had accidentally kicked her in the face while asleep and in retaliation she had kicked back.

When the girls awoke the next morning, the mischief continued. They ate donuts and strawberries for breakfast, crushed granola bars into Silly Putty and stuck it to the ceiling and played dress-up. Geyser chose to be Data from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Leutner was a pretty princess in pink, and Weier chose to be a “prosti-troll”. They then moved their games outside, setting off for David's Park.

While Leutner skipped up ahead, the two girls hung behind. Geyser pulled up the left side of her jacket to show her friend the kitchen knife she had snatched from her home and settled into her waistband. “I thought, dear god, this is really happening,” Weier told police.

When the girls reached the park, they crowded inside the public restrooms on its north-eastern edge, where Geyser



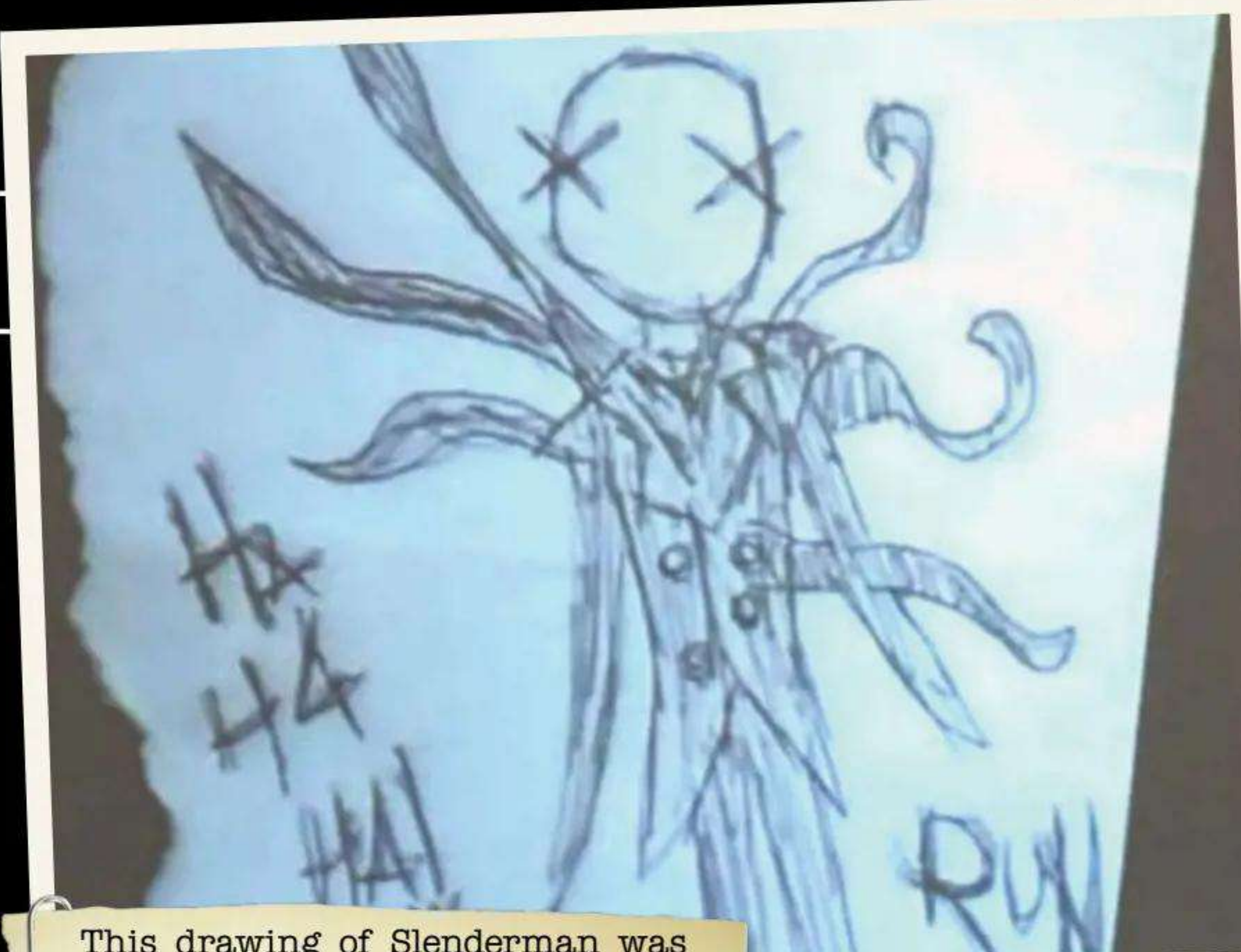
“AFTER LEAVING THEIR VICTIM FOR DEAD, THE GIRLS' EMOTIONS BEGAN TO SPIRAL”

THE SLENDERMAN LORE

WHO IS THIS PARANORMAL HORROR AND WHERE DID HE COME FROM?

Slenderman originates from a photograph submitted by Eric Knudsen (who went by the alias of 'Victor Surge') to the Something Awful forum in June 2009. The photo submitted was for a Photoshop competition. It is a black and white image of a tall, thin, ghost-like figure with tentacles for arms reaching across to a group of children in a playground. Slenderman quickly went viral, resulting in fan art and online fiction based on the character, which became

a favourite on sites such as Creepypasta, which features horror stories. He is almost always pictured around children. Some legends say he is an abductor or a kidnapper, while other more sinister folklores say that he disembowels his victims. He has the power to invade a person's thoughts and can cause 'Slender Sickness' consisting of nausea and coughing up blood, insanity and an incessant compulsion to draw, scribble and write.



This drawing of Slenderman was found in one of Geyser's notebooks that was recovered by police



and Weier attempted to stage their attack. They knew there was a drain there that would efficiently dispose of Leutner's blood after they had murdered her.

Geyser unsuccessfully tried to restrain Leutner, and Weier pushed her head into a wall. But then Geyser started to fall apart, she became agitated and began pacing and singing to herself. Weier attempted to comfort her friend and sent Leutner outside to play. Who knows why she chose to stay with the girls who had just assaulted her, perhaps she thought it just an off-spell in their friendship.

While Leutner played outside, Weier petted her friend "like a cat". She suggested they all go and play hide and seek in the woods on the far side of the park and kill their victim there when they were out of sight. When she calmed down, Geyser agreed and they set off towards the wooded area. But Leutner was not so eager to venture into the darkness of the trees. The pair convinced her they would be going bird watching. Geyser told detectives: "People who trust you become very gullible... it was sort of sad."

Geyser counted first while the other two hid in the woods, dark with thick brambles, bushes and weeds. While they hid, Weier told Leutner to lie down in the dirt. When she refused, Weier tried to restrain her by sitting on her, causing the girl to cry out that she couldn't breathe from the

weight of the girl on top of her. Worried that her screaming might attract attention, Weier rose to her feet as Geyser arrived at her side and handed her accomplice the knife.

Weier said she was "too squeamish" to stab the girl and handed back the knife. The pair got into a discussion about which of them would stab Leutner, who was engrossed in some flowers in the dirt. "I'm not going to until you tell me to," Geyser said. Weier started to walk away, but she had only gone a few paces when she stopped and turned back to her friend, and told her: "Kitty, now. Go ballistic. Go crazy."

With her permission, Geyser began her violent and brutal attempt at murder. "It didn't feel like anything. It was like air," she told police during her interview. Weier told police that she watched on as Leutner screamed in agony from her multiple stab wounds. As she lay in the dirt, they told her they would go to get help. "But we really weren't. We were gonna run and let her pass away. So we ran," said Weier.

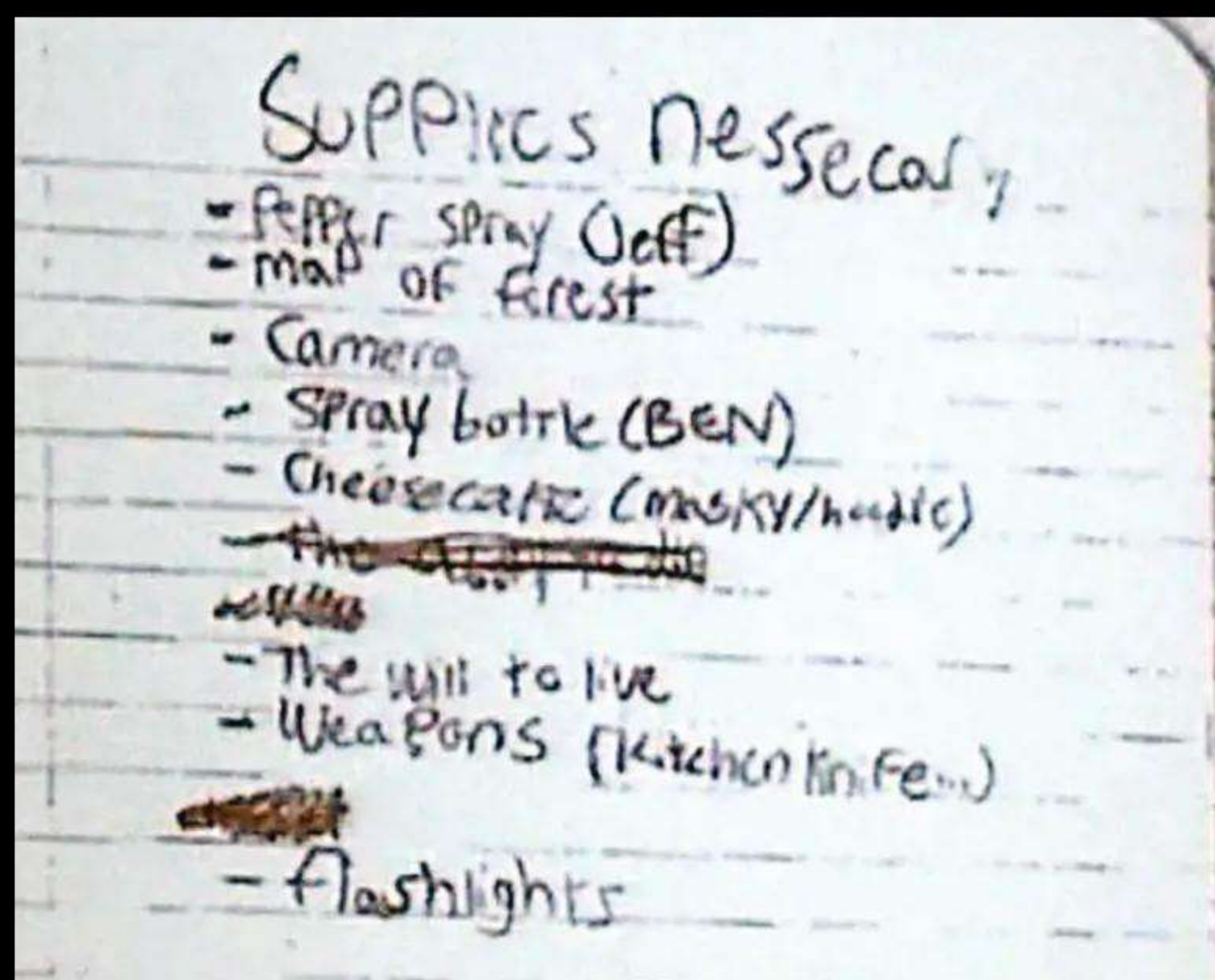
After leaving their victim for dead, the girls' emotions began to spiral. Initially Geyser was "surprisingly calm", but Weier said she was in the midst of a nervous breakdown and was blaming her friend for everything that had happened. Geyser eventually began to cry. She told her friend that she had "kinda, sorta" made a deal with Slenderman. She had telepathically communicated with him and told him that if

ABOVE LEFT One of the disturbing drawings found in Geyser's notebooks recovered by police after her arrest

ABOVE Geyser (top) and Weier were both charged with first-degree attempted homicide, waived out of juvenile court despite attempts by their lawyers to stop them being tried as adults

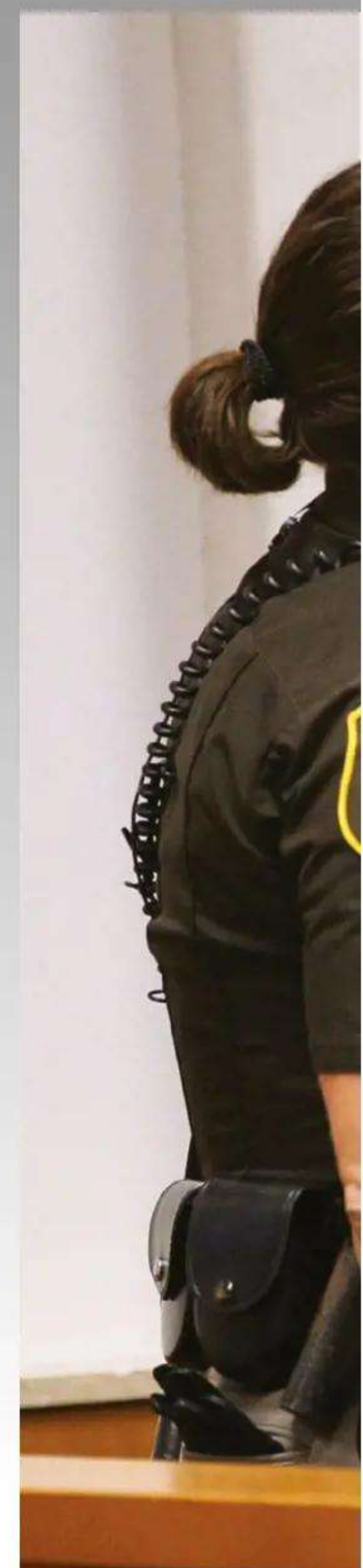
SLNDERMAN SHOPPING LIST

GEYSER AND WEIER PREPARED A LIST OF SUPPLIES THEY THOUGHT THEY WOULD NEED ON THEIR 'MISSION' — AN INDICTMENT OF HOW CHILDISH THIS FANTASY WAS, IN SPITE OF ITS DEADLINESS



RIGHT TOP Judge Bohren argued "even the best efforts to secure someone outside of a secure facility doesn't always work." He therefore denied the girls' request for house arrest

RIGHT BOTTOM The girls' attorneys, Anthony Cotton (seated) and Joseph Smith confer in court in August 2014



they failed to go through with the murder, then Slenderman could kill both their families. Panic-stricken, Weier's thoughts turned to her family and the desire to go home.

SLNDER CHANCE

Somehow Leutner managed to crawl through an opening in the trees. As she lay on an abandoned and cordoned-off path on the other side of the trees, a passing cyclist noticed the girl's bloody body. She was awake and alert, but struggling with every breath. He called 911 and within minutes the emergency services had bundled her into an ambulance, taking her to a hospital less than seven kilometres away, where she underwent life-saving surgery.

Before the anaesthetic took effect, she managed to tell police who her attackers were. As she fell into a state of unconsciousness, the police were working away to find the two 12-year-old girls who had done this to her.

According to the surgeon who operated on Leutner, the knife had come directly down towards a major artery and cut the tissue away, leaving it totally exposed. The point of the knife had stopped at the wall of the artery — certain death had been less than a millimetre away. He said that had she been stabbed again in the same place or the knife gone any deeper, she would have suffered a heart attack from the bleeding and would have died within minutes.

During an exclusive interview with American news programme *ABC News 20/20*, the victim's mother and father recalled how their daughter had been excited for weeks about the sleepover at her best friend's house. They had known Geyser for years and had no reason to suspect what would happen that day. When police told Leutner's mother that her daughter had been stabbed by Geyser, she could hardly believe what she was hearing. She grabbed her son and made her way to the hospital. "Morgan's stabbed Payton," she told her husband on the phone.

It took two nurses to total up the number of stab wounds Leutner had suffered. Both nurses agreed on 19 wounds on her body including five on her arms and seven on her legs.

Police picked Geyser and Weier up at the side of a road nine kilometres away from the crime scene. After they had left their victim for dead, they had washed up in a Walmart bathroom, filled their water bottles in the same sink and wondered around Waukesha for a couple of hours.

When they had left Geyser's house that morning, they had brought 'supplies' with them, which included the weapon, a couple of granola bars and some water bottles. Each girl bought her own keepsakes. Weier had brought old family photographs, while Geyser had brought her mother's old purse. Inside she had stashed the weapon. Weier had left two messages on her mobile phone, one bequeathed all her possessions to her parents, while the other read: "This is my final wish to those who care, do not grieve my absence, but remember me for who I was. I love and cherish you all and wouldn't do you harm."

BACK TO REALITY

When arrested, the girls said that they were on their way to the Slenderman Mansion. When officers searched

“ BOTH CLAIMED THAT THEY HAD SOMEWHAT RELUCTANTLY TRIED TO KILL THEIR FRIEND, IN THE BELIEF THAT IT WAS NECESSARY, TO APPEASE SLNDERMAN ”



their rooms, they found a number of discarded dolls. One was covered in scars drawn on with pen, one's arm had been butchered off below the elbow while others were missing hands and feet. Another had a symbol used to ward off Slenderman scribbled on its abdomen. Officers also recovered a vast amount of disturbing drawings. One showed a girl in cat ears standing over the body of another girl, the words "I love killing people" above her head. Other doodles were recovered, with phrases including "I want to die" and "You are strange child... it will be of use to me" scribbled onto the pages.

After several hours of interrogation, both girls were charged with first-degree attempted homicide. Both claimed that they had somewhat reluctantly tried to kill their friend, in the belief that it was "necessary" to appease Slenderman.

Since their arrest in May 2014, they have remained in custody, their bail set at \$500,000 each. Geyser is currently being held in a psychiatric unit, where she has been since March 2016 following a diagnosis of early onset schizophrenia, which is rare for someone of such a young age. Weier is being held at a West Bend juvenile jail.

Their trial date has been postponed as a result of an intense legal battle to decide the degree to which the girls are responsible for their actions. In Wisconsin, those over the age of ten that are charged with first-degree attempted homicide are automatically considered an adult in a court of law. The girls' attorneys have argued they belong in a juvenile court due to varying degrees of mental illness. They also argue that if they are put in an adult prison, they will not receive appropriate treatment. They have asked Judge Michael Bohren to consider the law that allows the two to be tried as adults 'unconstitutional'. However, Bohren rejected their arguments. He said that while he acknowledged the

girls' mental state, he deemed the crime to be a "vicious" act of premeditated murder. He added that if the girls were tried as children, they would be released by the age of 25 without any continued support, whereas in an adult system they could be released under close supervision and continued treatment. On that basis, he ruled that the girls be tried as adults in August 2015. In 2017, Weier was diagnosed with schizophrenia and a jury found her "not guilty by mental disease or defect". She was sentenced to 25 years to life under psychiatric supervision. Geyser was given 40 years under supervision. Her petition to be tried as a juvenile was rejected in 2020.

It has been argued that the girls have benefited from their separation and are no longer a danger to the public. Anthony Cotton, an attorney for one of the girls, alleges that his client has been sexually assaulted while in jail and said he is concerned for the "mental health functioning of his client." The team also requested a reduction in her bail. However, the judge denied the request and has explained that since the girls had tried to escape following the attack, he could not be sure that a decision to release them before the trial would be wise.

Leutner recovered and later returned to school. She is seemingly happy and healthy, enjoying school and making friends. But she still has a way to go to recover mentally. When her parents asked her how she managed to pull herself out of the woods, she replied, "I wanted to live." On the wall in her bedroom is a display of paper and fabric hearts in her favourite colour, purple. There are messages of support from people in the community and also from around the world. Plenty praise her bravery and determination, while one simply reads: "Don't let one act of evil stop you from seeing the beauty in the rest of the world."

ABOVE LEFT Morgan Geyser's defence attorney said that with the use of anti-psychotic medication, her mental health had significantly improved since her incarceration

ABOVE During her interview, Anissa Weier admitted that she knew what it meant to murder someone and that she "regretted it"





The Bosnian Honey trap

MOB BOSS DJORDJE ZDRALE
THOUGHT HE WAS MEETING FORMER
'MISS BOSNIA' SLOBODANKA TOSIC
FOR A DATE, BUT THE NIGHT ENDED
WITH AN ATTEMPT ON HIS LIFE AND
BEGAN THE DOWNFALL OF A DEADLY
BALKANS GANG

WORDS DAVID HUTT

Who knows what must have been going through Djordje Zdrle's mind when he received a text message from Slobodanka Tosić, a Playboy model and former Miss Bosnia, asking the Bosnian Serb mobster out for a date? But it became apparent as soon as they arrived at her chosen location, in the Croatian village of Pavlovac, that all was not as it seemed. When Tosić gave the signal, a hail of bullets rained down on Zdrle.

Zdrle had fallen in to a 'honey trap'. Tosić was working with the mobster's rival, a Sarajevo Mafia boss named Darko Elez, who she was rumoured to be romantically linked with. She was also allegedly a member of Elez's criminal organisation, said to be one of Bosnia's most deadly. The plan, however, went awry. Elez's men opened fire on Zdrle but, despite being wholly outgunned, he was only wounded and managed to flee the scene with his life.

In 2015, nine years after the event, Tosić was arrested in Croatia and extradited to Bosnia and Herzegovina to face trial for her role in the attempted murder. The following year, a Bosnian court sentenced her to two and a half years in jail for assisting in an attempted murder. At the time of the trial, Zdrle was serving a 20-year stretch for an unrelated murder and was brought from his prison cell to testify against the former Miss Bosnia and his arch-rival, Elez. Tosić had been part of a monumental police investigation, codenamed 'Operation Doll'. As well as leading to the model's arrest, the sting also helped secure the convictions of 32 Balkan mobsters linked to Elez's criminal organisation.

THE BALKAN MAFIA

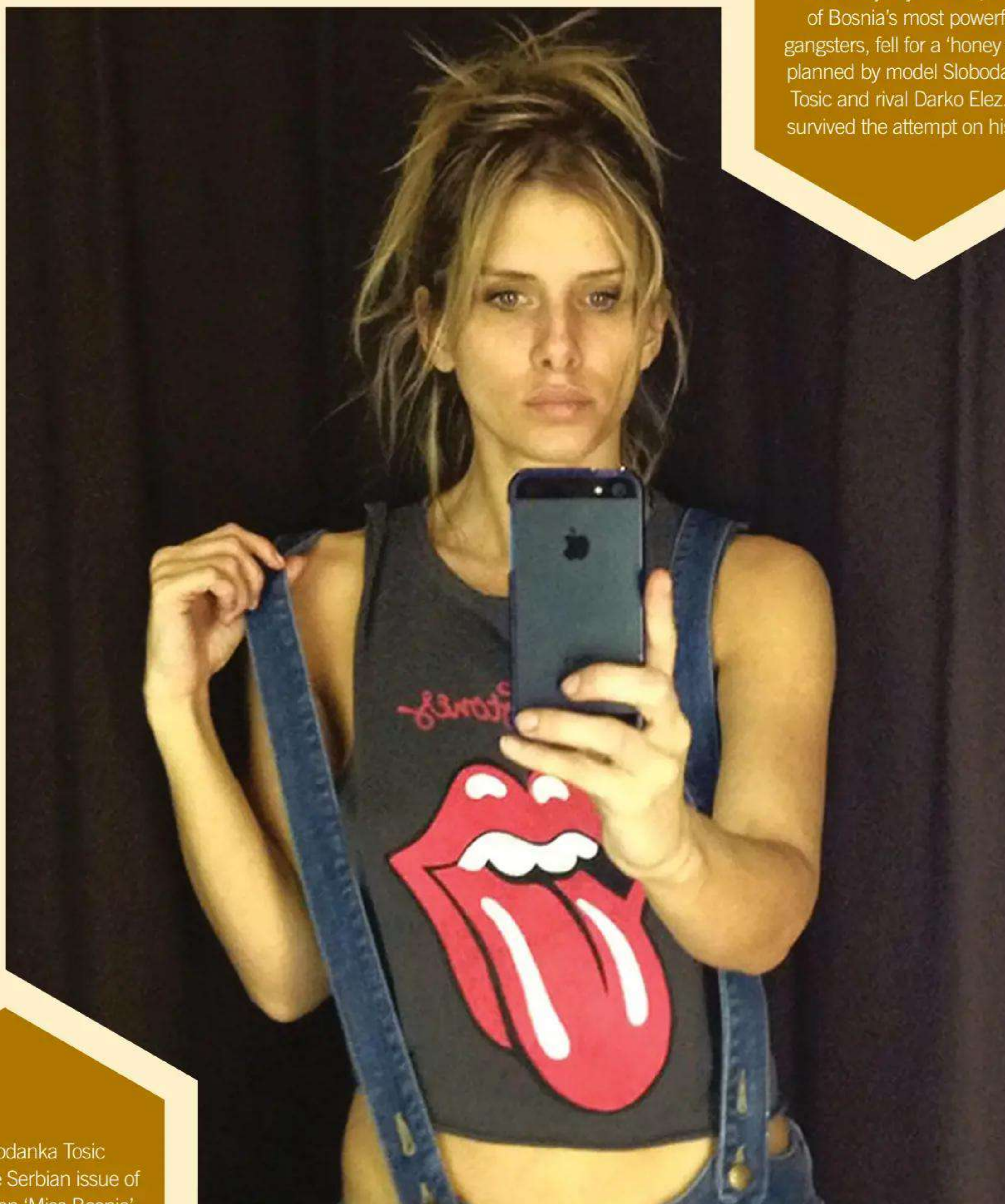
For much of the late-20th century, the so-called Serbian Mafia operated away from the Balkans. Active in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and other western European nations, their small outfits were known for drug trafficking, bank robberies and extreme violence. Back at home, in what was then Yugoslavia, the iron-grip of communist leader Josip Broz Tito kept crime in the country down to a minimum, and he tried his best to limit the amount of profit that could be made from trading on the black market.

The breakthrough for the Balkan gangs, however, came in the 1990s with the collapse of communist Yugoslavia and the ensuing sectarian battles of the Yugoslav Wars. Not only did the international sanctions placed on a number of the newly formed states (mostly those allied with the Serbian regime led by eventual war criminal Slobodan Milosevic) see the emergence of a ripe black market for such criminal organisations to thrive on, it also saw the merging of paramilitary units and criminal gangs.

Following the resignation of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000 and another breakup of the Balkans into smaller states, the region's criminal organisations further fragmented into factions, which began competing for control against those who typically dominated the area from Belgrade. Connections between political figures and underworld bosses also helped the factions to thrive.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina during this time, criminal activity was centred on the dominance of the so-called 'Sarajevo godfathers', many of whom returned to the country from elsewhere in Europe. The 1990s and early 2000s were profitable times for the Balkan mobsters. The relationships built between Afghans and Bosnians during the Bosnian

RIGHT Slobodanka Tosić appeared in the Serbian issue of *Playboy* and won 'Miss Bosnia' when she was 19 years old



RIGHT Djordje Zdrle, one of Bosnia's most powerful gangsters, fell for a 'honey trap' planned by model Slobodanka Tosić and rival Darko Elez. He survived the attempt on his life

War in the early 1990s allowed the region to become an ideal route for the trafficking of heroin. However, geography and history meant close ties were needed between the Bosnian, Serbian, Montenegrin, Croatian, Macedonian and Slovenian outfits. Croatia and Montenegro boast long coastlines, ideal for the arrival of heroin and cannabis from the Middle East and cocaine from Africa, and suited for the trafficking of narcotics and people across the Adriatic in to Italy. Control of the borders of Serbia and Macedonia, meanwhile, was necessary for the export and import of goods to and from Eastern Europe and, further on, Russia.

By the mid-2000s, however, many of the Balkan ganglords – those who had grown fat during the region's locust years and the political instability of the 1990s – were either behind bars, wanted for human-rights violations committed during the Yugoslav Wars, or approaching the age when many gangsters begin considering retirement. The way was being paved for new blood, whether the old mobsters liked it or not. The emergence of a power vacuum in Bosnia saw a number of young upstarts, known as the 'East Sarajevo boys', attempt to take the place of the 'old guard'. One was Darko Elez; another was Djordje Zdrle.

“ THE BREAKTHROUGH FOR THE BALKAN GANGS CAME IN THE 1990S WITH THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNIST YUGOSLAVIA ”



WAR CRIMINALS

CRIMINALS THRIVE IN WAR-TIME SITUATIONS, WHEN BLACK MARKETS OPEN UP AND LAWLESSNESS PREVAILS. AFTER THE BREAK UP OF YUGOSLAVIA, THERE WERE RICH PICKINGS FOR THE BALKAN GANGSTERS

The Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s provided a fertile environment for the growth of the Balkan Mafia. Often there was a crossover between paramilitaries and the criminal gangs. The Serb Volunteer Guard, for example, was founded and led by Zeljko Raznatovic, who had been one of Interpol's most wanted men during the 1970s after he was accused of committing a number of murders and bank robberies across Europe, before going on to lead the extremely violent Ultras group loyal to the football team Red Star Belgrade. The Serb Volunteer Guard engaged in criminal activities, such as black marketing, theft, trafficking and looting, and its members were also accused of committing crimes against humanity. Raznatovic was indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal but was assassinated before his trial could take place.

FORMER FRIENDS

Little is known about Darko Elez's rise to power in the Balkan underworld, but the belief of those involved in the police investigation codenamed 'Operation Doll' was that his group had become one of the largest gangs in Bosnia, forming close ties with other gangs across the Balkans from 2004 onwards.

More is known about Zdrle, however. In the 1990s, he is believed to have served in the Army of Republika Srpska, also known as the Bosnian Serb Army, one of the main belligerent forces during the Bosnian War. It is most famous for having had as its chief of staff Ratko Mladic, the so-called 'Butcher of Bosnia', who was accused of being responsible for the Srebrenica massacre, a genocide of more than 8,000 Muslim Bosnians in 1995.

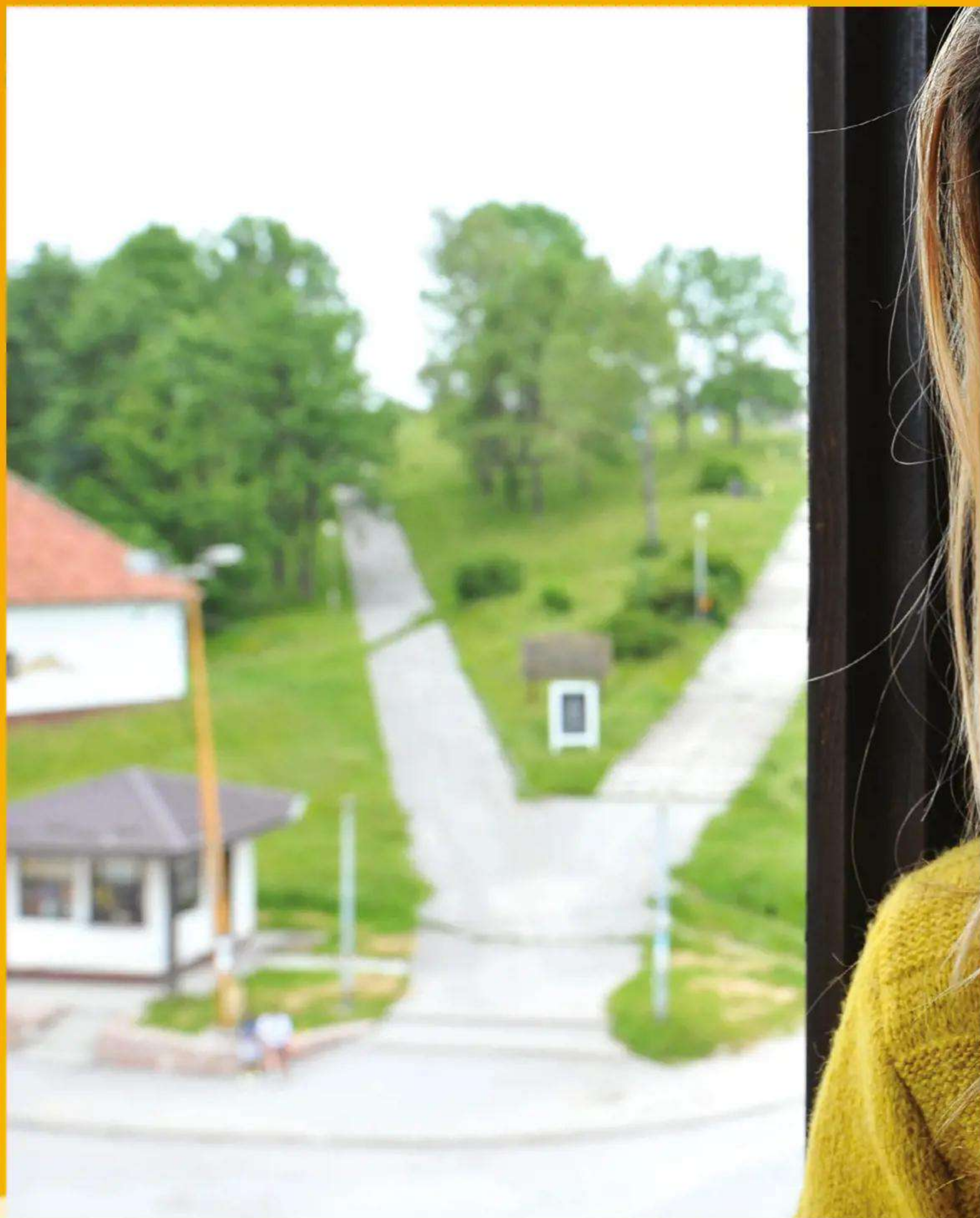
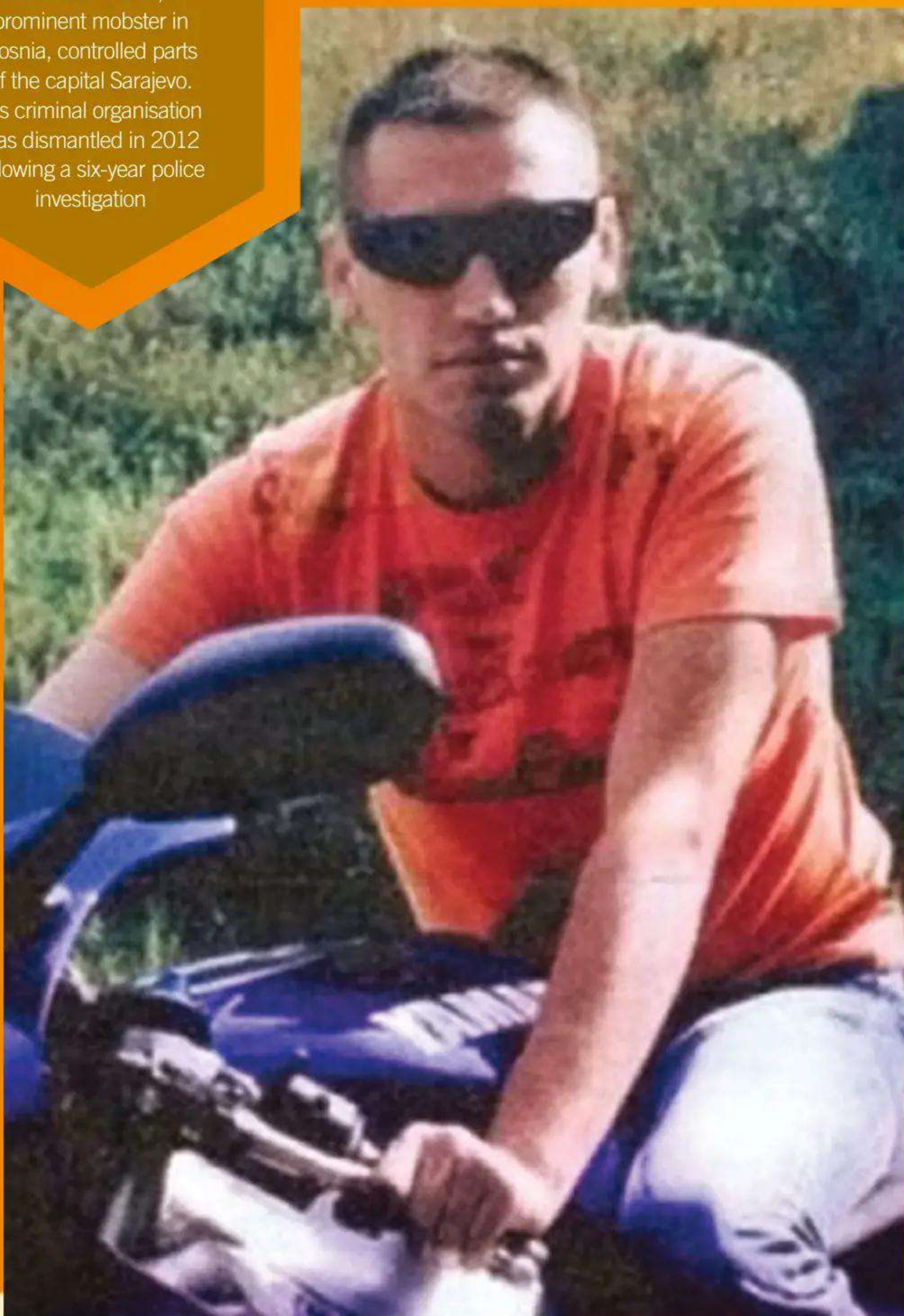
After the wars, Zdrle is thought to have risen through the ranks of the region's underworld as an enforcer for the Sarajevo godfathers before making it out on his own. One report suggested that he was also the money collector for Radovan Karadzic, another Bosnian Serb war criminal.

There are indications that, at first, Zdrle and Elez were on good terms with one another. According to a report in *Crime Without Borders*, a book on international criminal justice, Elez had even been a groomsman at Zdrle's wedding. It is not known what started



ABOVE The long coastline of Croatia makes it a hotbed for drug smuggling from Africa into Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia

RIGHT Darko Elez, a prominent mobster in Bosnia, controlled parts of the capital Sarajevo. His criminal organisation was dismantled in 2012 following a six-year police investigation



their bitter feud, but it escalated rapidly, and it wasn't long before each was building their own formidable organisation. The syndicates were subsequently said to be two of Bosnia's most dangerous gangs.

By 2006, Zdrle had become powerful enough for a Serbian contract killer to cross over into Bosnia with orders to assassinate him – it is not known who ordered the hit. But when the bullet jammed in the barrel, Zdrle returned fire, almost killing the assassin.

The incident showed not only the multinational activity of criminal organisations in the Balkans, but also the ease with which trafficking and warring takes place between Bosnian and Serbian gangs.

The border between these two nations is 363 kilometres long. Much is uninhabited wilderness, thick with forest or shrubland, which makes it relatively easy to travel between the two countries without alerting the authorities. This makes it a perfect location for drug and people trafficking. But on the flip side, it also leaves criminal organisations in each country susceptible to attacks by freely moving rival gangs, looking to expand and to control the lucrative Balkan narcotics and crime market.

After the fracas started between Elez and Zdrle, the two mobsters' rivalry often saw battles on either side of the border. Elez, who holds dual citizenship of Bosnia and Serbia, had formed strong ties with Serbian mobsters, as had Zdrle. In 2006, Elez and his associates reportedly crossed into Serbia to kill Boris Govedarica, a member of Zdrle's group.

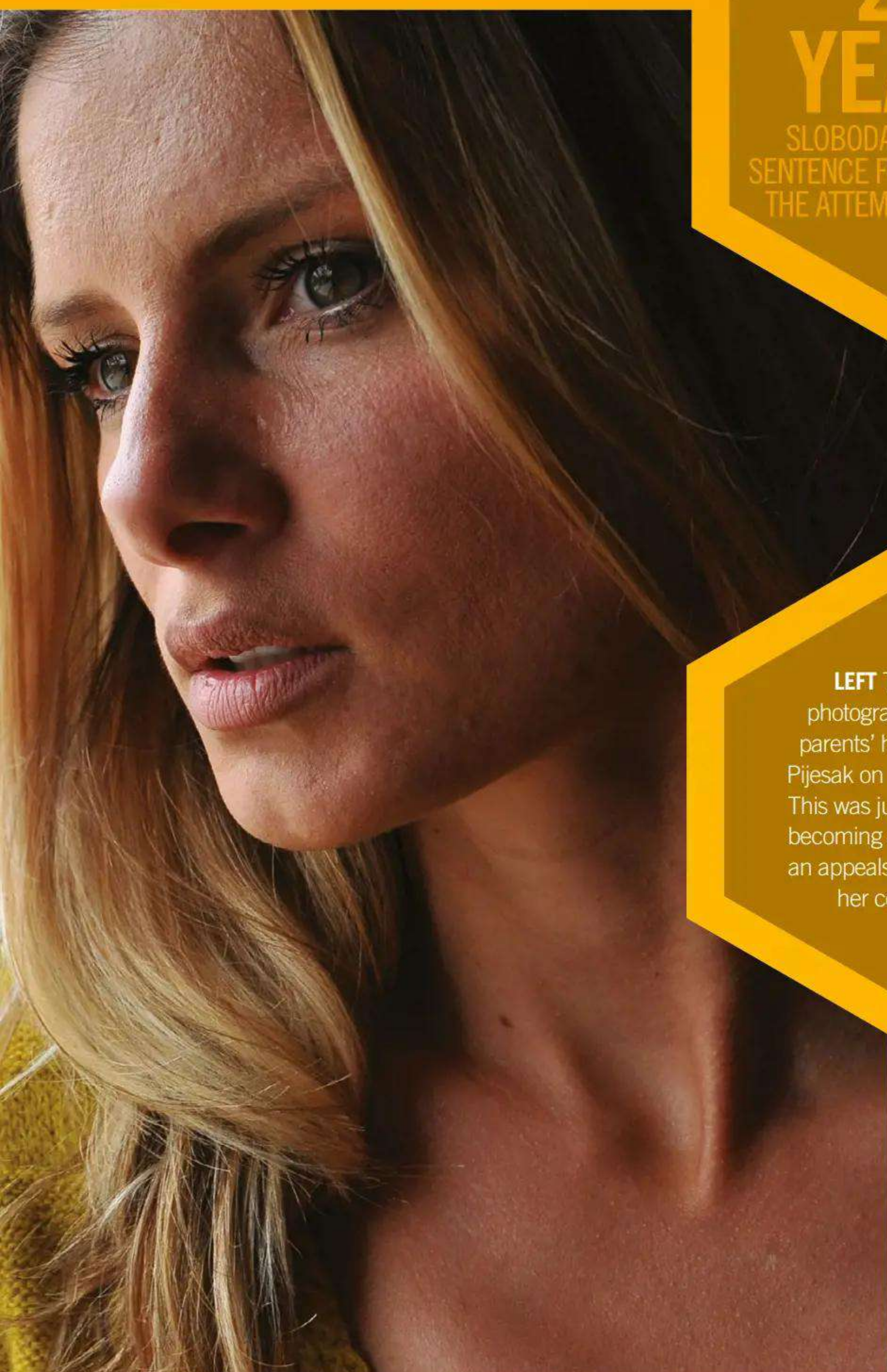
“ WHEN THE APPEALS COURT CONVENED AND UPHELD TOSIC'S CONVICTION, SHE WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN. SHE WAS ON THE RUN ”

The same year, Elez convinced his Miss Bosnia girlfriend to lure Zdrle to his own death in a plan that would fail with spectacular consequences.

THE FALL

In 2009, Zdrle was finally arrested in Germany, travelling on a Croatian passport, for the murder of Ljubisa Savic Mauzer, a former paramilitary commander who became chief of the Bosnian Serb police force. The murder had taken place nine years earlier, and Zdrle was sentenced to 20 years in prison by a Bosnian court. In the same year, Elez was arrested in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia. He was sentenced to nine years in prison for his criminal activities.

Three years previously, the Bosnian security forces had decided a new taskforce was needed to bring down the heads of the local criminal organisations and, with the assistance of investigators from Serbia and other nations, began work on piecing together the operations of Elez's and Zdrle's gangs. This became known as 'Operation Doll'. Evidence was scrutinised, witnesses interviewed and low-level criminals pushed to provide evidence against the leaders of the outfits.

2.5
YEARSSLOBODANKA TOSIC'S
SENTENCE FOR HER ROLE IN
THE ATTEMPTED MURDER\$650-
950MTHE ESTIMATED ANNUAL
REVENUE FROM SMUGGLING
IN BOSNIA

2006

THE YEAR IN WHICH BOSNIAN
AUTHORITIES LAUNCHED
'OPERATION DOLL'

32

THE NUMBER OF CRIMINALS
LINKED TO ELEZ ARRESTED
BECAUSE OF OPERATION
DOLL2.8
TONSCOCAINE SEIZED BY A POLICE
RAID ON AN ELEZ GANG
SHIPMENT IN 200920
YEARSDJORDJE ZDRALE'S SENTENCE
FOR THE MURDER OF LJUBISA
SAVIC MAUZER

LEFT Tosic was
photographed in her
parents' house in Han
Pijesak on 12 July 2016.
This was just prior to her
becoming a fugitive after
an appeals court upheld
her conviction

363
KILOMETRES
THE LENGTH OF THE BOSNIAN
AND SERBIAN BORDER9
YEARSDARKO ELEZ'S SENTENCE
FOR ENGAGING IN CRIMINAL
ACTIVITY40
YEARSRADOVAN KARADZIC'S
SENTENCE FOR HIS ROLE
IN THE SREBRENICA
MASSACRE

\$907M

ILLEGAL PROFITS MADE IN
SERBIA AT THE TURN OF THE
MILLENNIUM

The information collected is believed to have been instrumental in securing the arrests of Zdrale in Germany and Elez in Serbia. By 2012, further evidence led to a nationwide crackdown on gangsters, which saw 32 people connected to Elez's organisation arrested and sentenced for a myriad of crimes, including murder, extortion, blackmail, robbery, and the trafficking of drugs and weapons. "All that turned this group into one of the most organised criminal groups in the region and beyond," a police report stated. "This criminal group was strengthening every day standing out in its brutality and unscrupulousness, and threatening to rise above the system and cause serious consequences to the security of citizens and society as a whole."

Shortly after the arrests, Elez's organisation was reportedly dismantled. Also, as part of the investigation, Slobodanka Tosic was arrested.

THE 'INNOCENT' LURE

After being sentenced to two and a half years in prison in March 2016 for her part in the attempted murder of Zdrale ten years earlier, Tosic announced that she would appeal the decision. The court allowed Slobodanka to reside in her parents' house near the capital of Sarajevo with restrictions on her movement.

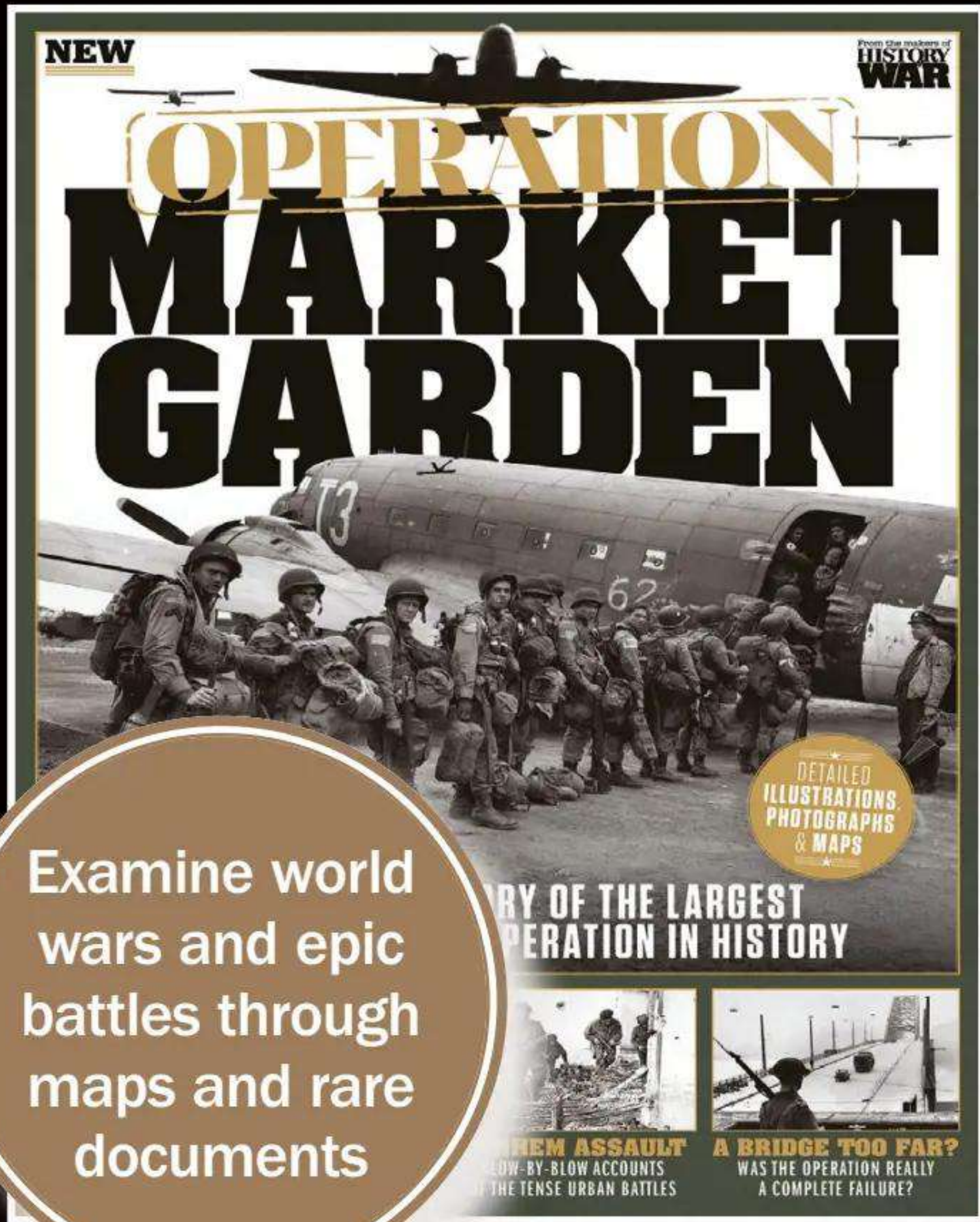
However, when the appeals court convened in July that year and upheld Tosic's conviction, she was nowhere to be seen. She was on the run. Unbelievably, the Bosnian

state court took an entire month to inform Interpol of her disappearance, though the international police organisation is now investigating her whereabouts. Her Interpol profile is a simple Google search away, featuring a more modest brunette photo of the model-turned-fugitive.

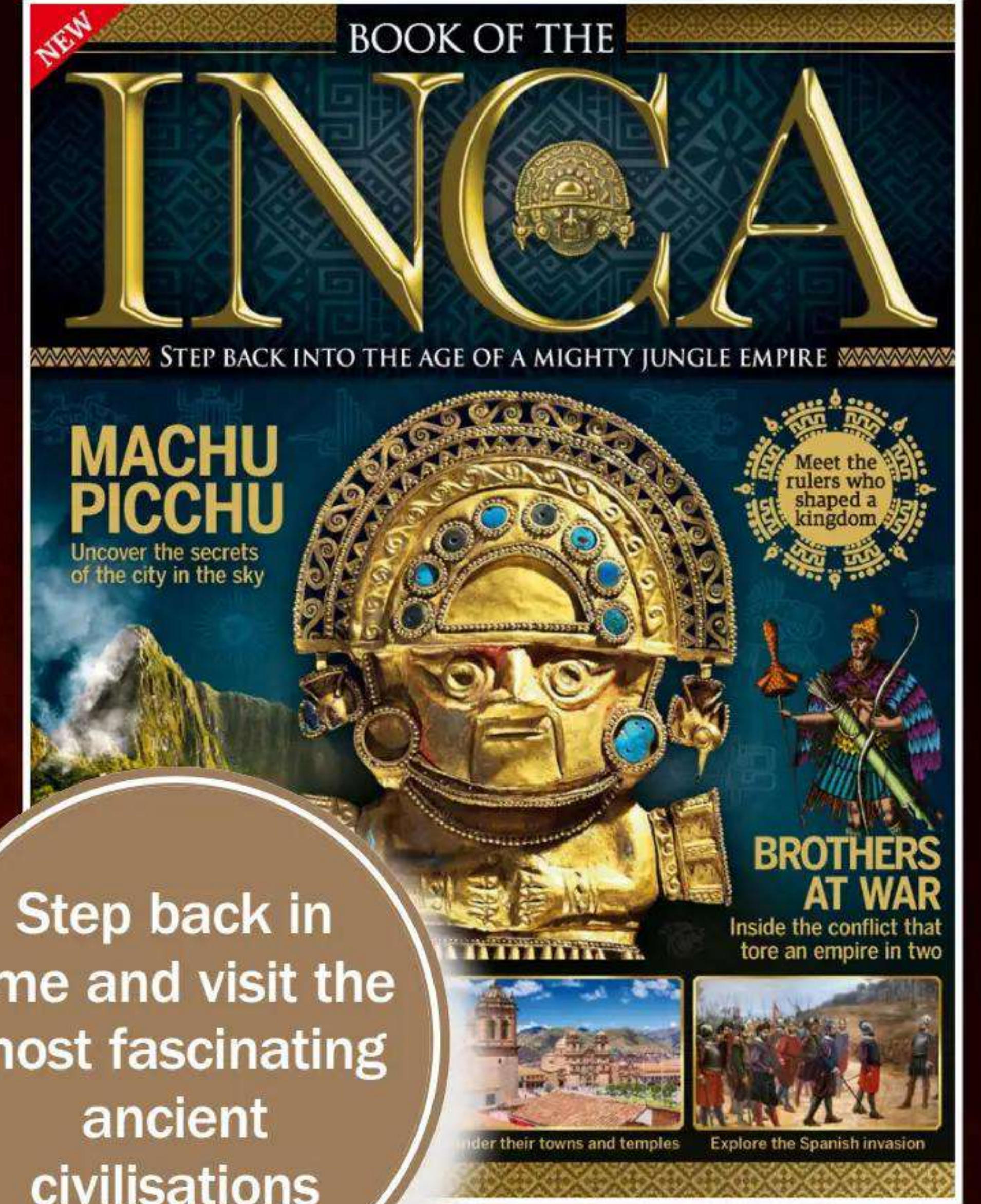
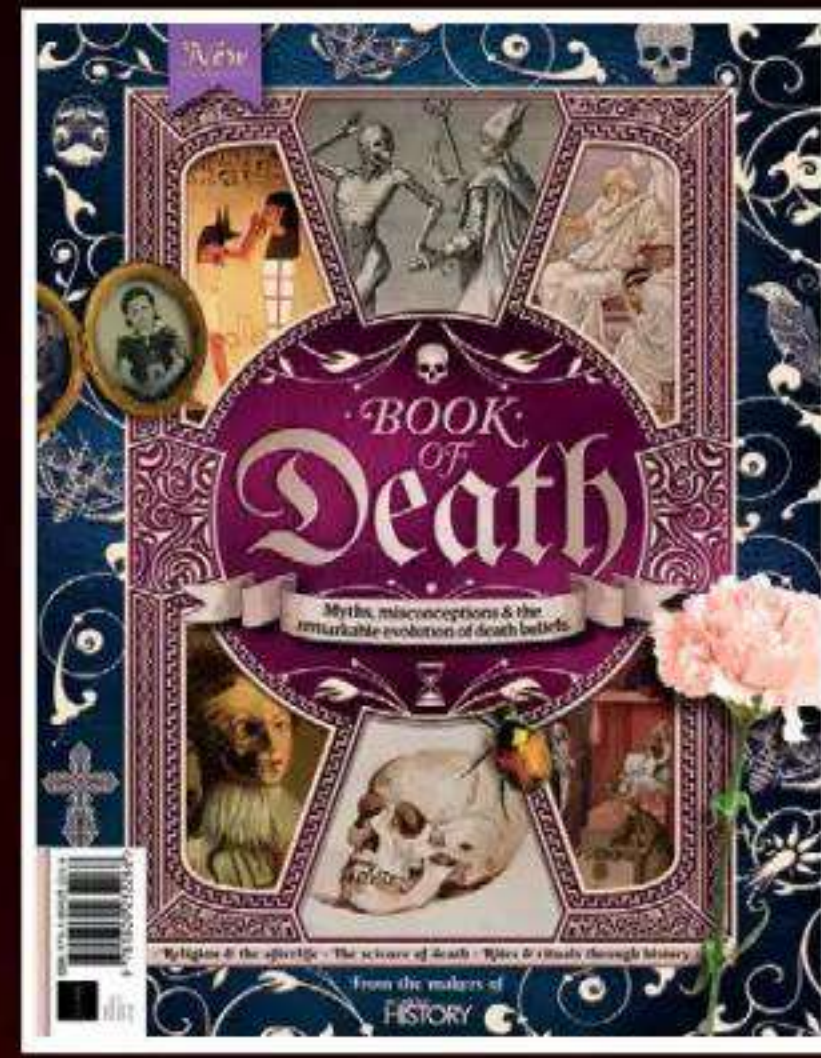
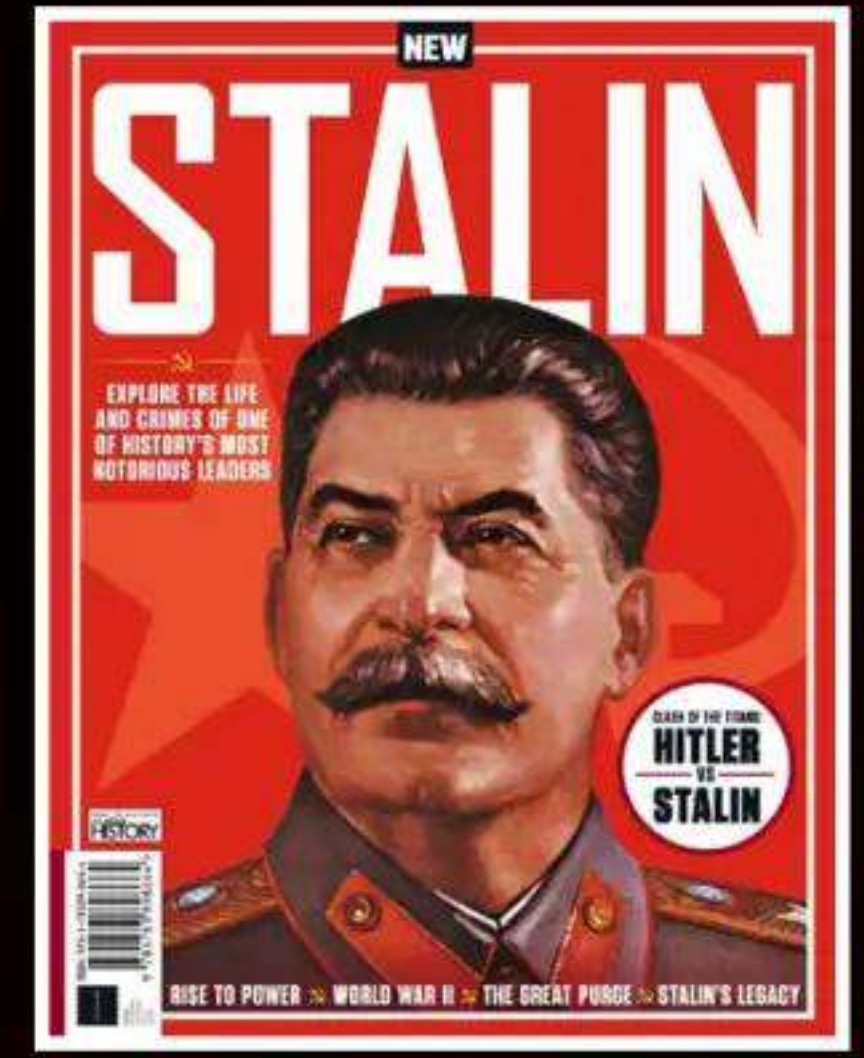
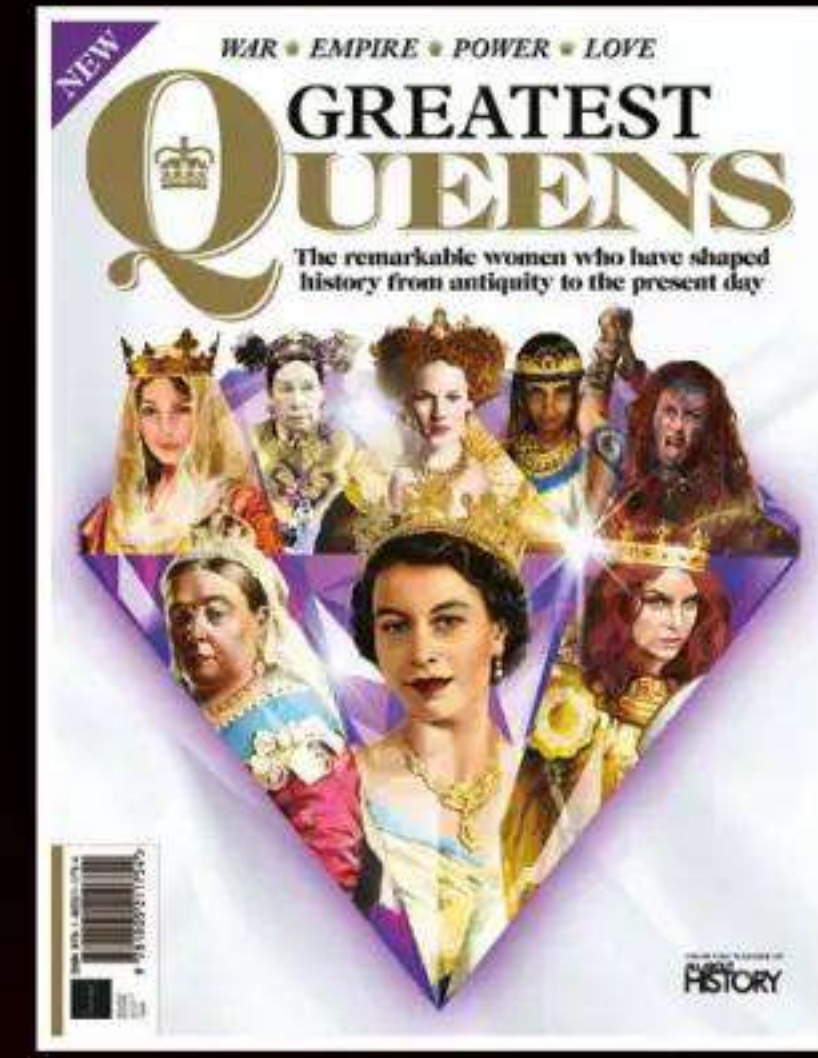
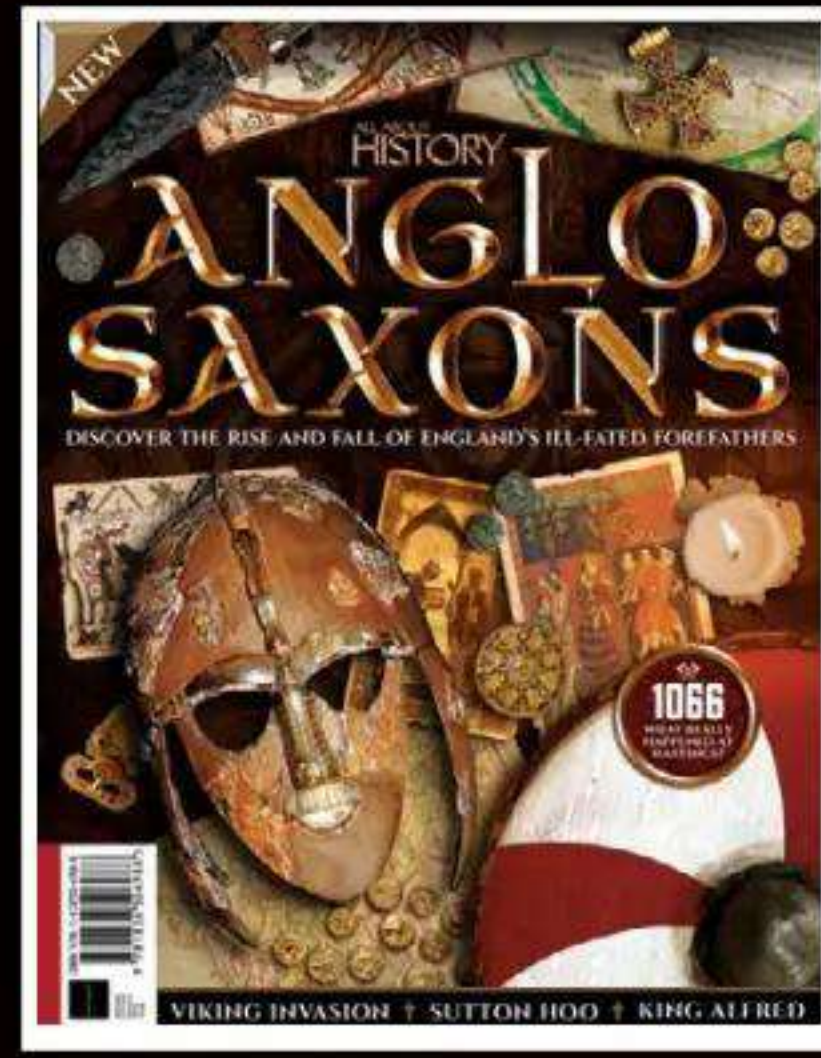
In February, her mother, Jadranka, told a British tabloid that her daughter was "framed" and that there was no way Tosic would surrender herself to the Bosnian authorities. "She is not a fugitive. She left for Serbia because we lost confidence in Bosnia's legal system," her mother said. "She is a great girl and her youth was destroyed by this case. She is not hiding but she is tired all of this. She feels helpless."

What started as a 'date' and ended with a failed assassination played a pivotal part in the downfall of two of the Balkans' most dangerous men. Perhaps it was jealousy, or maybe just the desire for revenge, that led Zdrale to take to the stand to give evidence against Jadranka and his former crime-rival Elez.

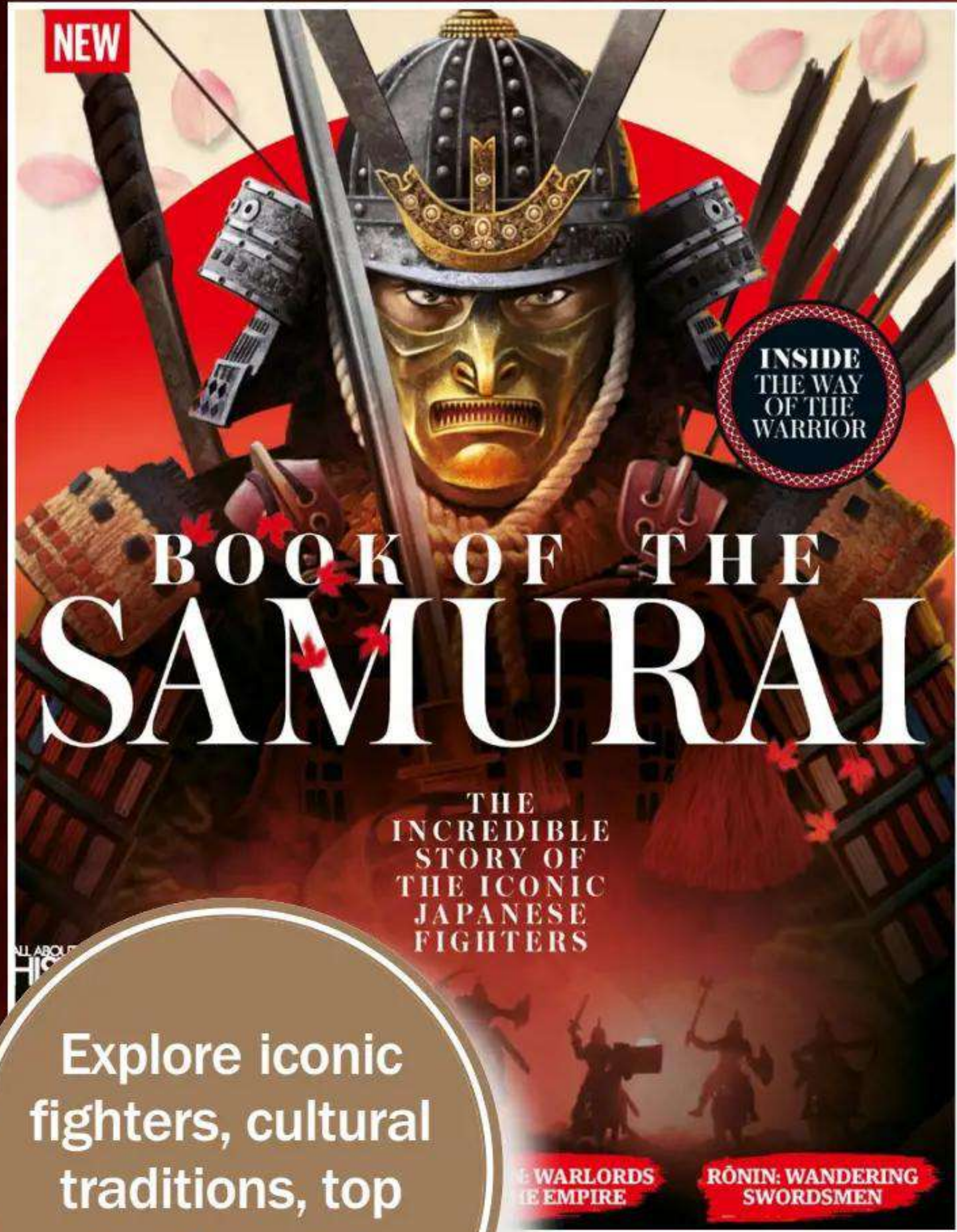
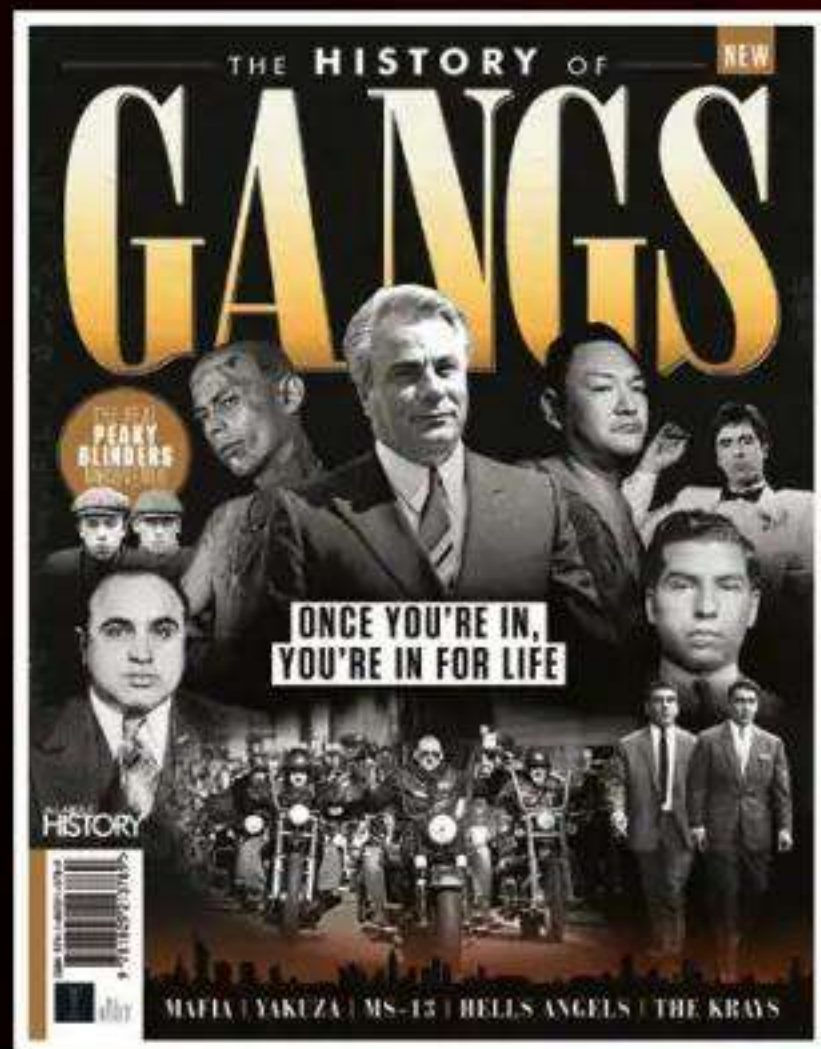
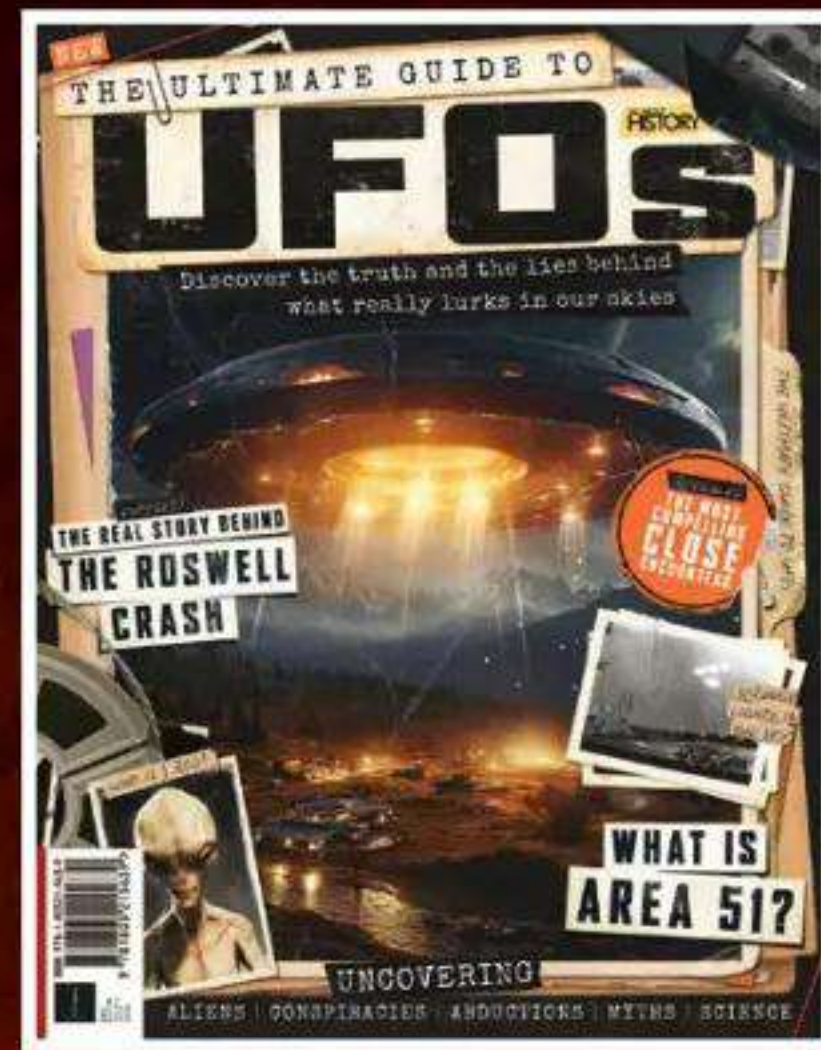
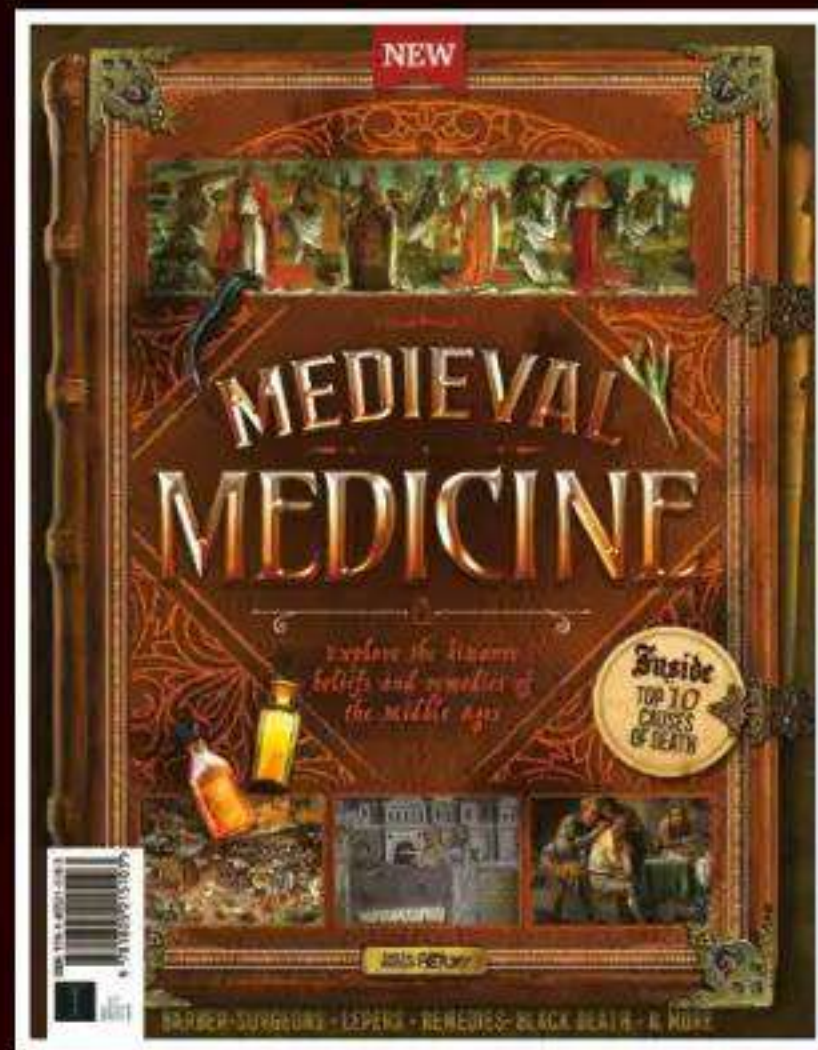
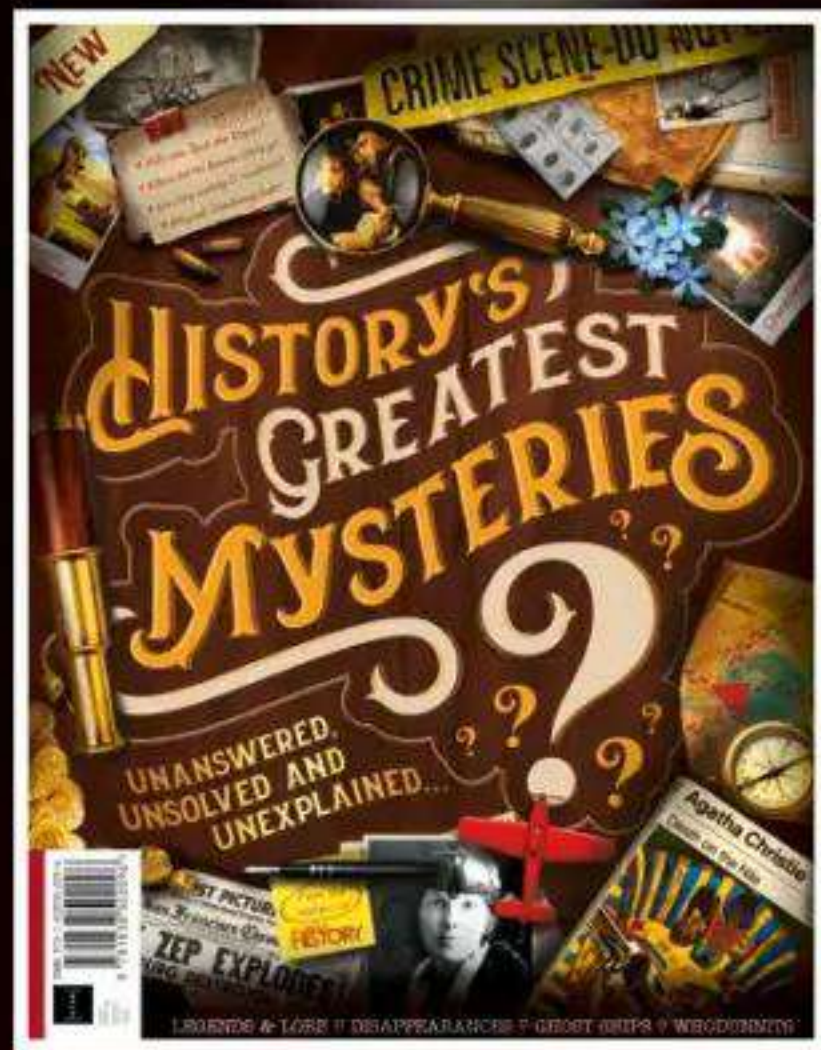
For the Bosnian police, 'Operation Doll' was heralded as a monumental success, not only in bringing together law enforcement from across the region but also for getting dozens of mobsters off the streets and in to prisons cells. Of course, others have since taken their place. But the once-feared names of Zdrale and Elez will forever be remembered for the bumbling 'honey trap' involving a former supermodel. As for that model, either with poetic justice or ironic unfairness, she ultimately found herself caught in the trap she tried to set for Zdrale.



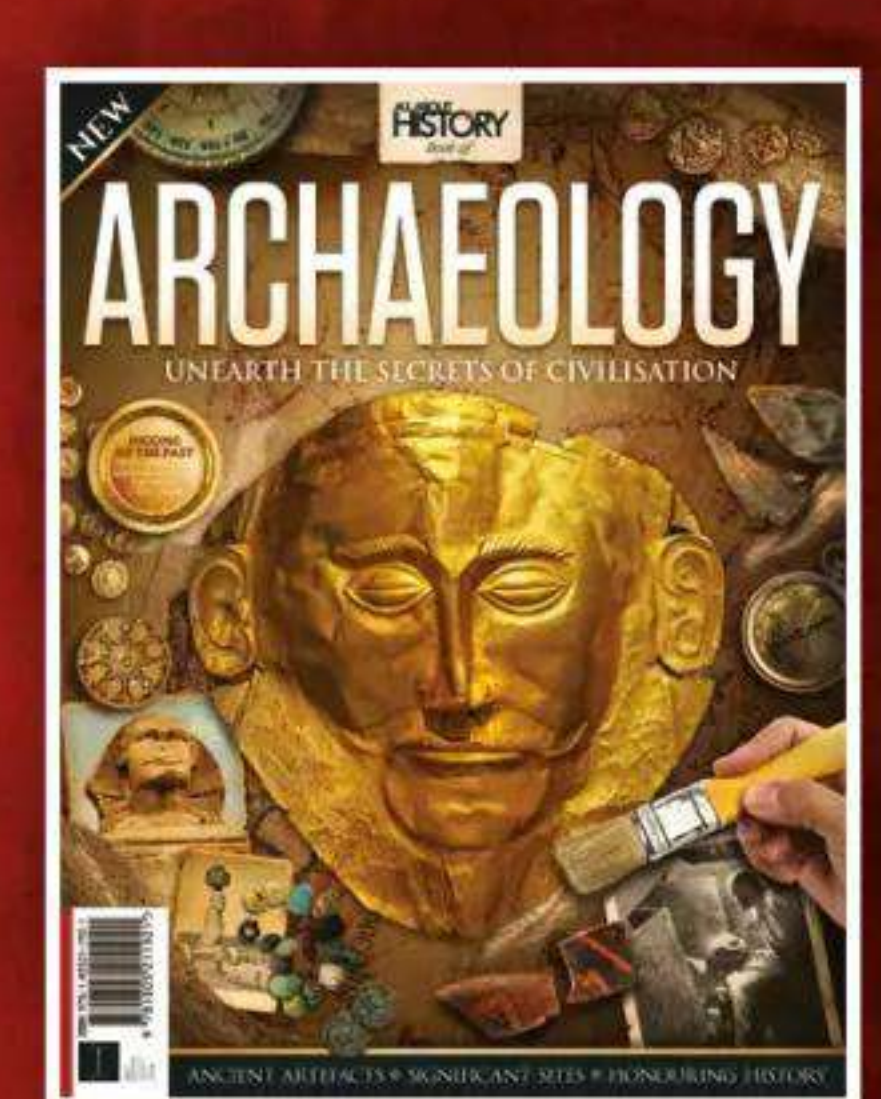
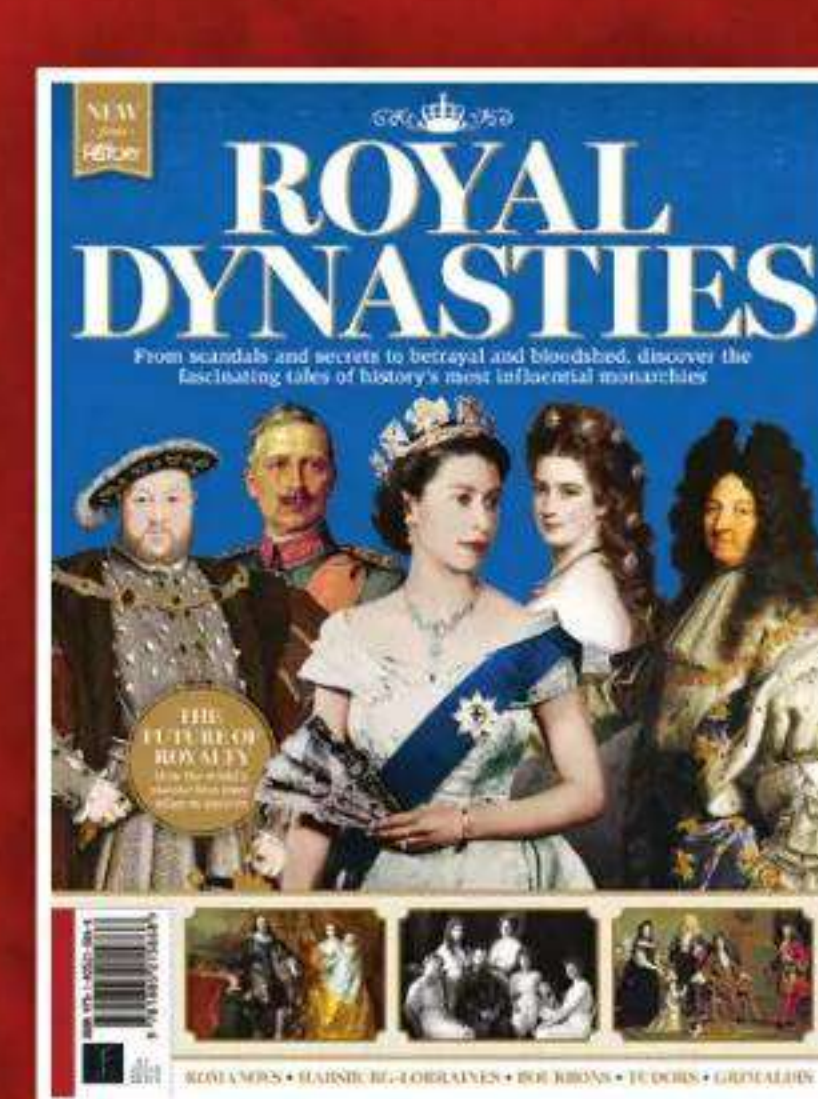
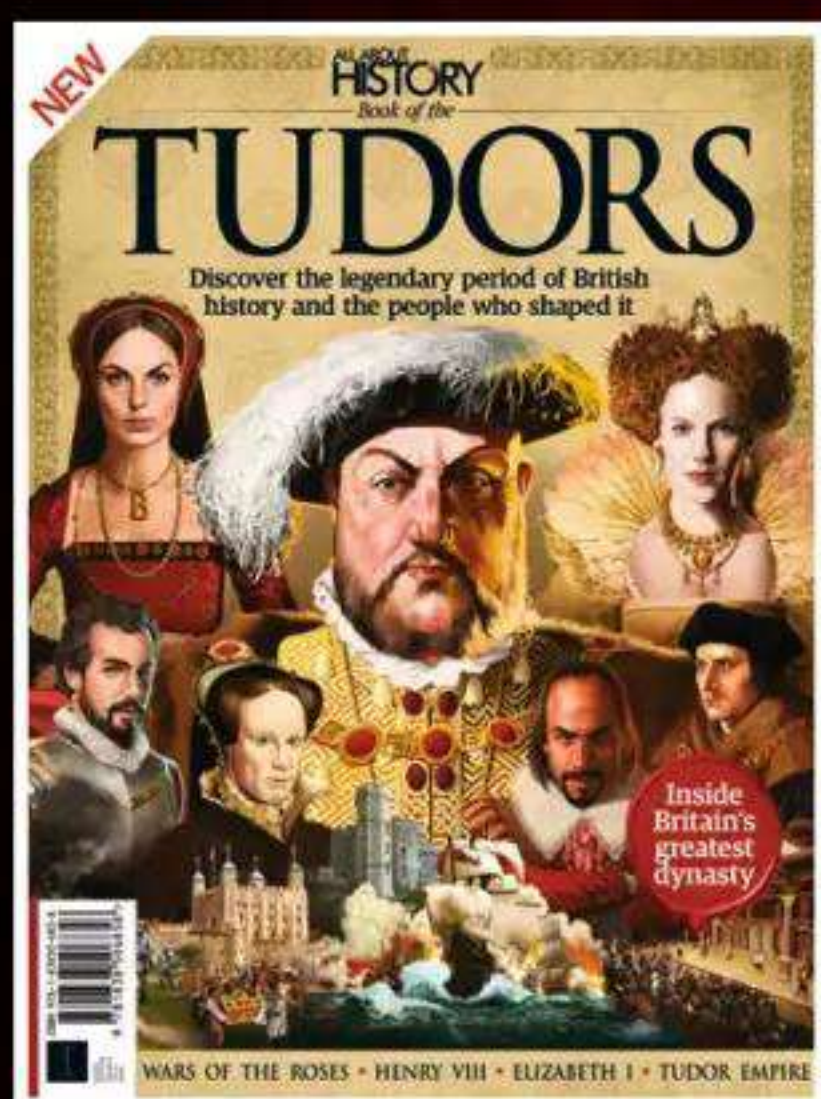
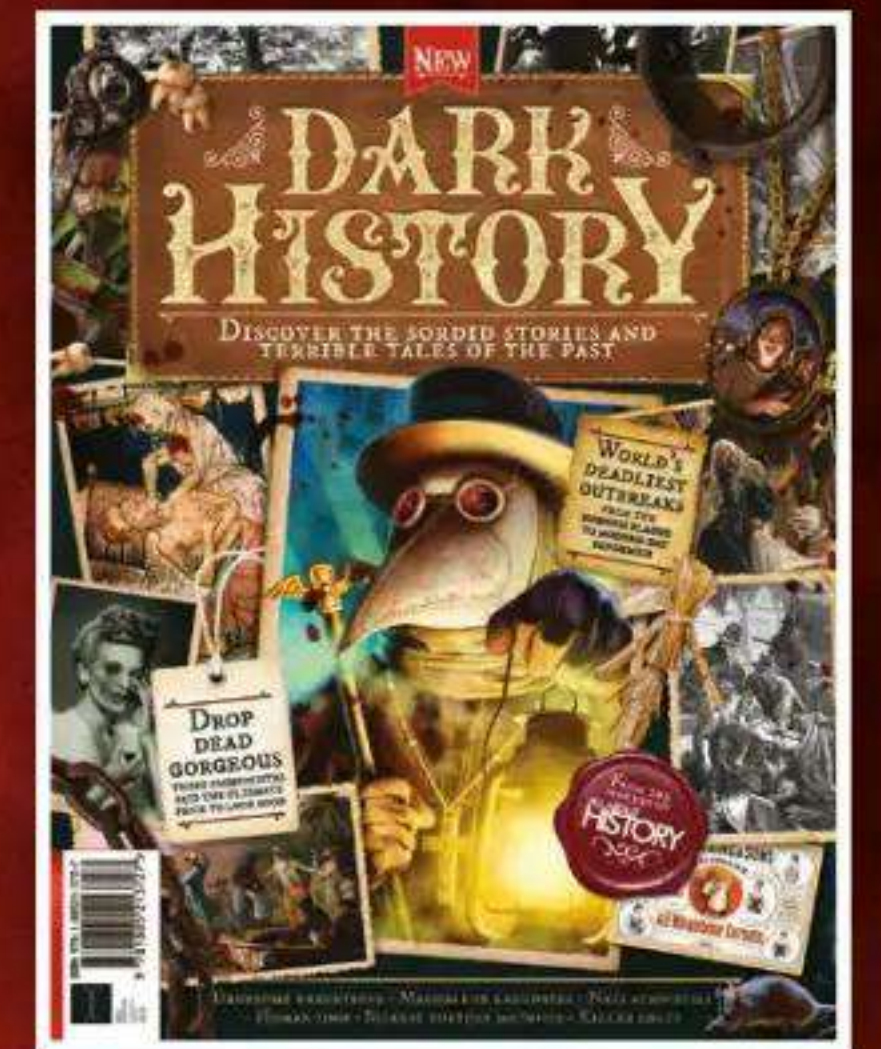
Examine world wars and epic battles through maps and rare documents



Step back in time and visit the most fascinating ancient civilisations



Explore iconic fighters, cultural traditions, top tactics and weapons



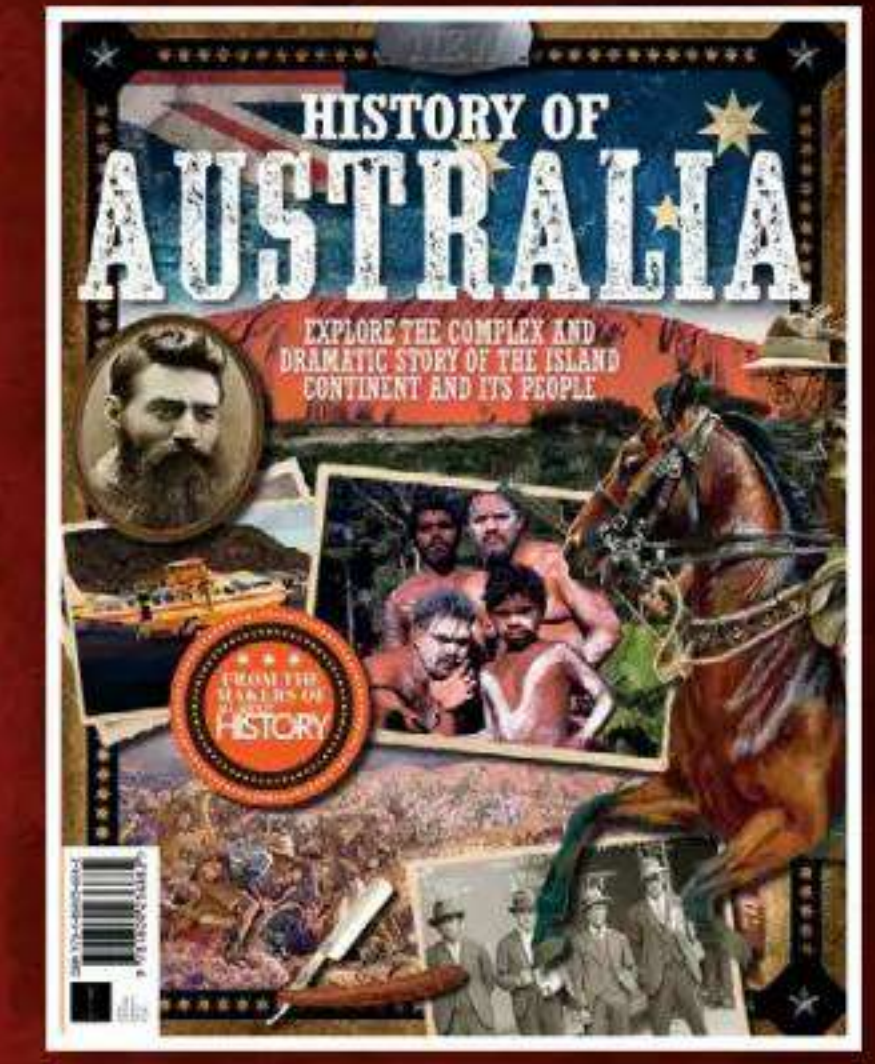
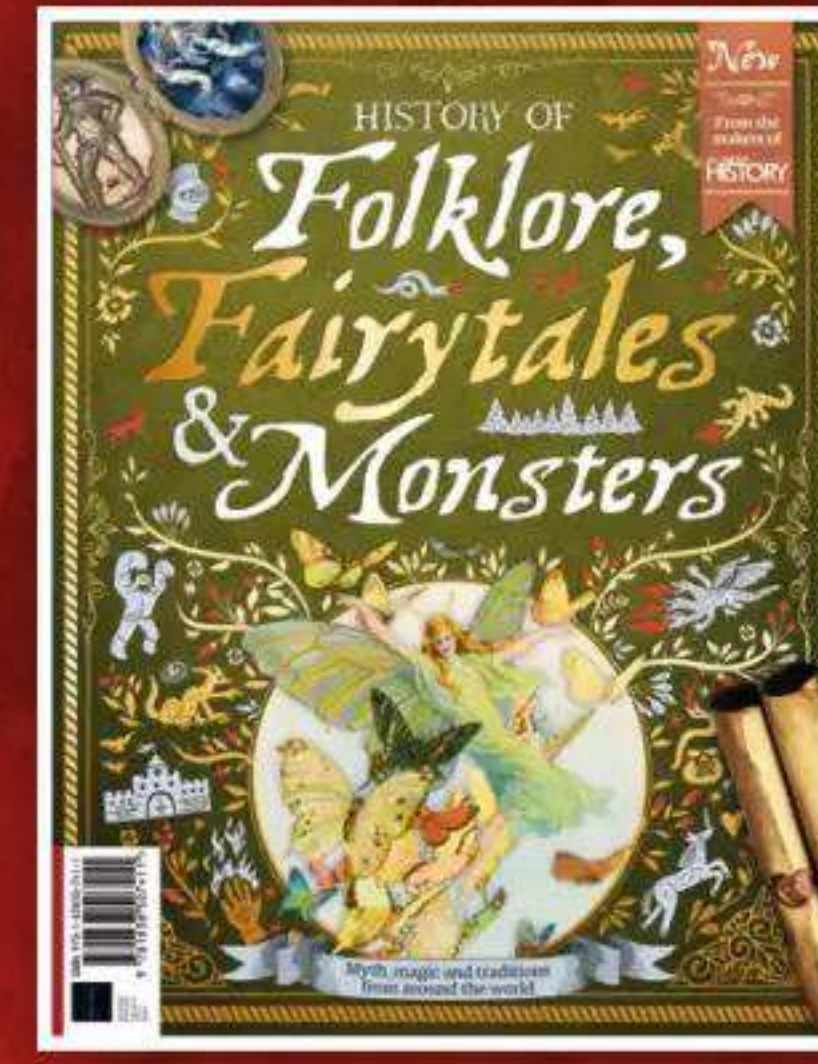
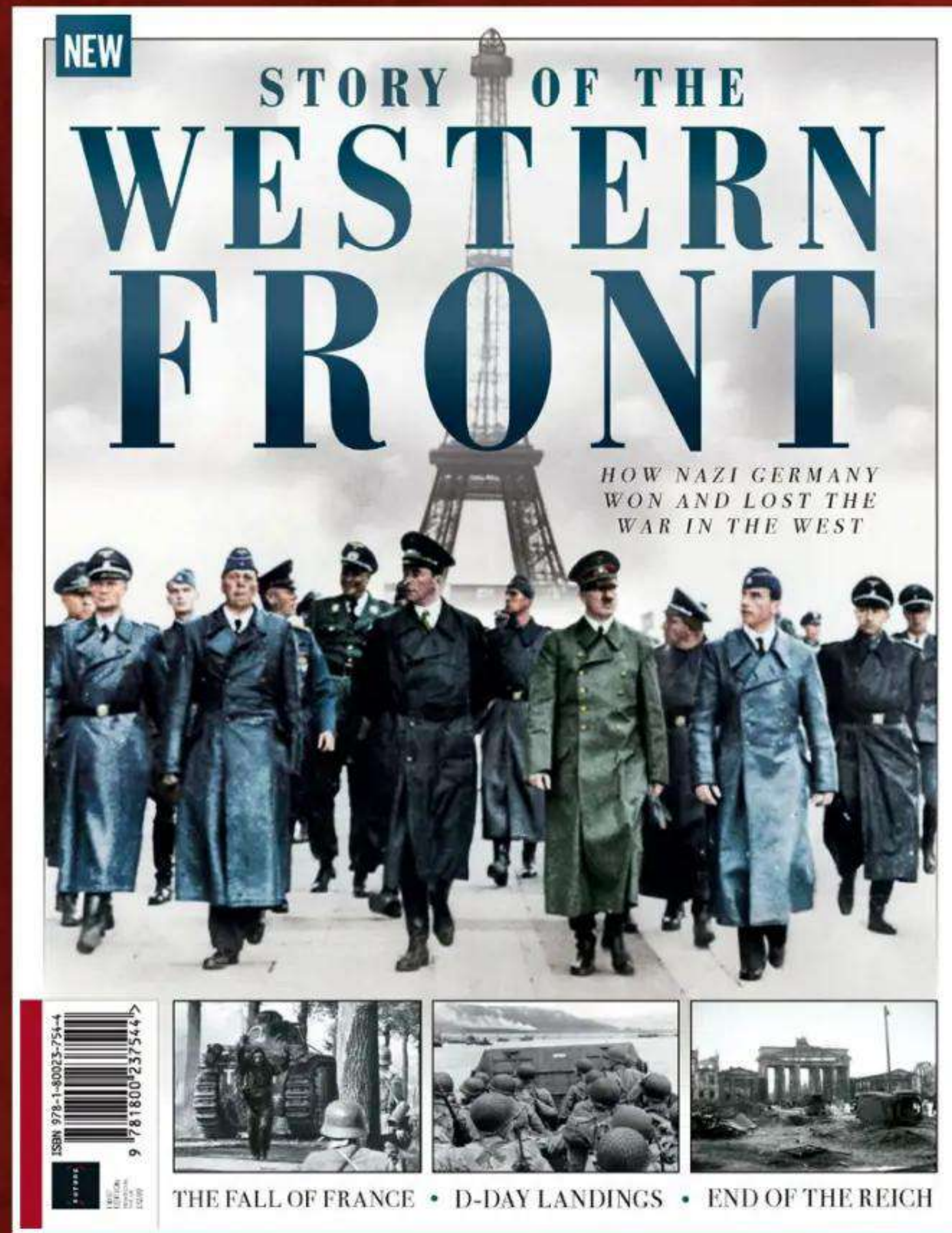
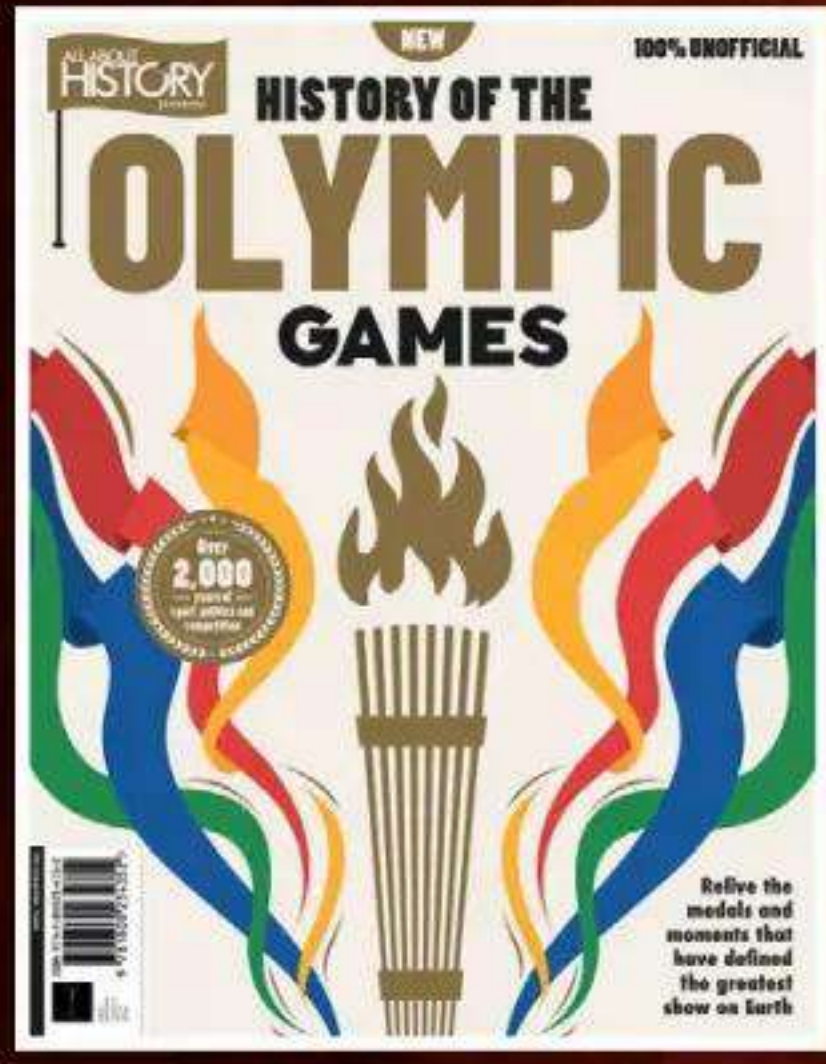
Get great savings when you buy direct from us



1000s of great titles, many not available anywhere else

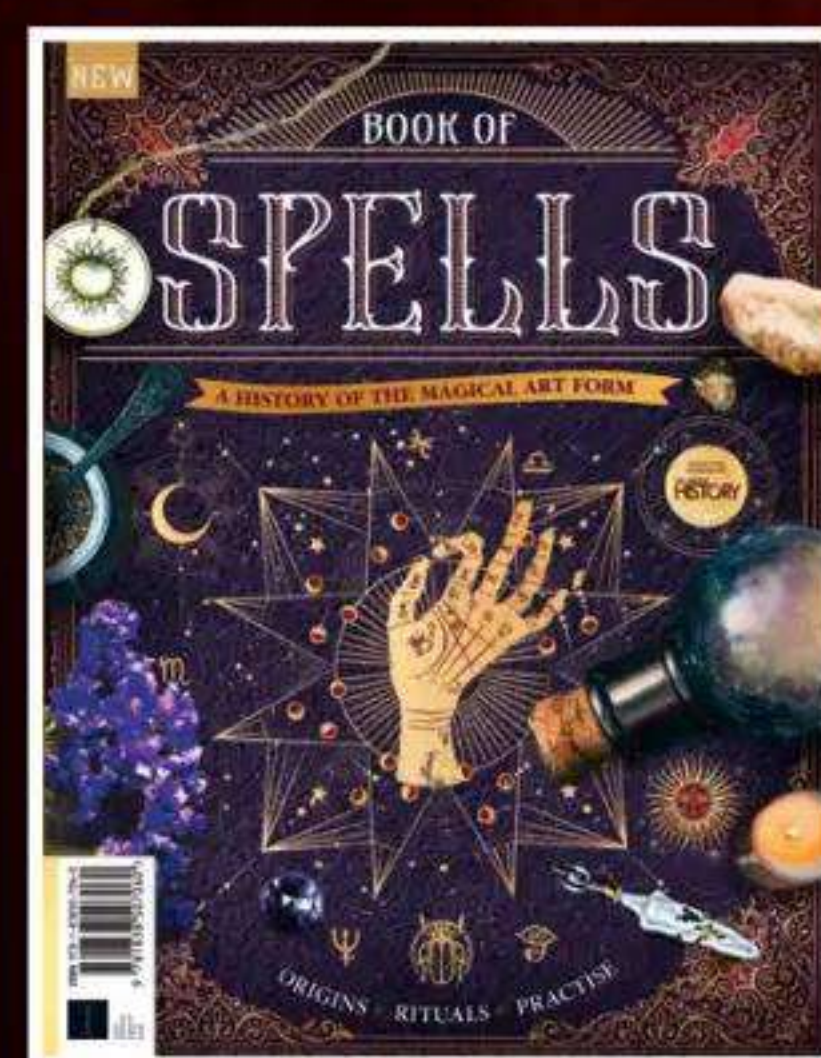
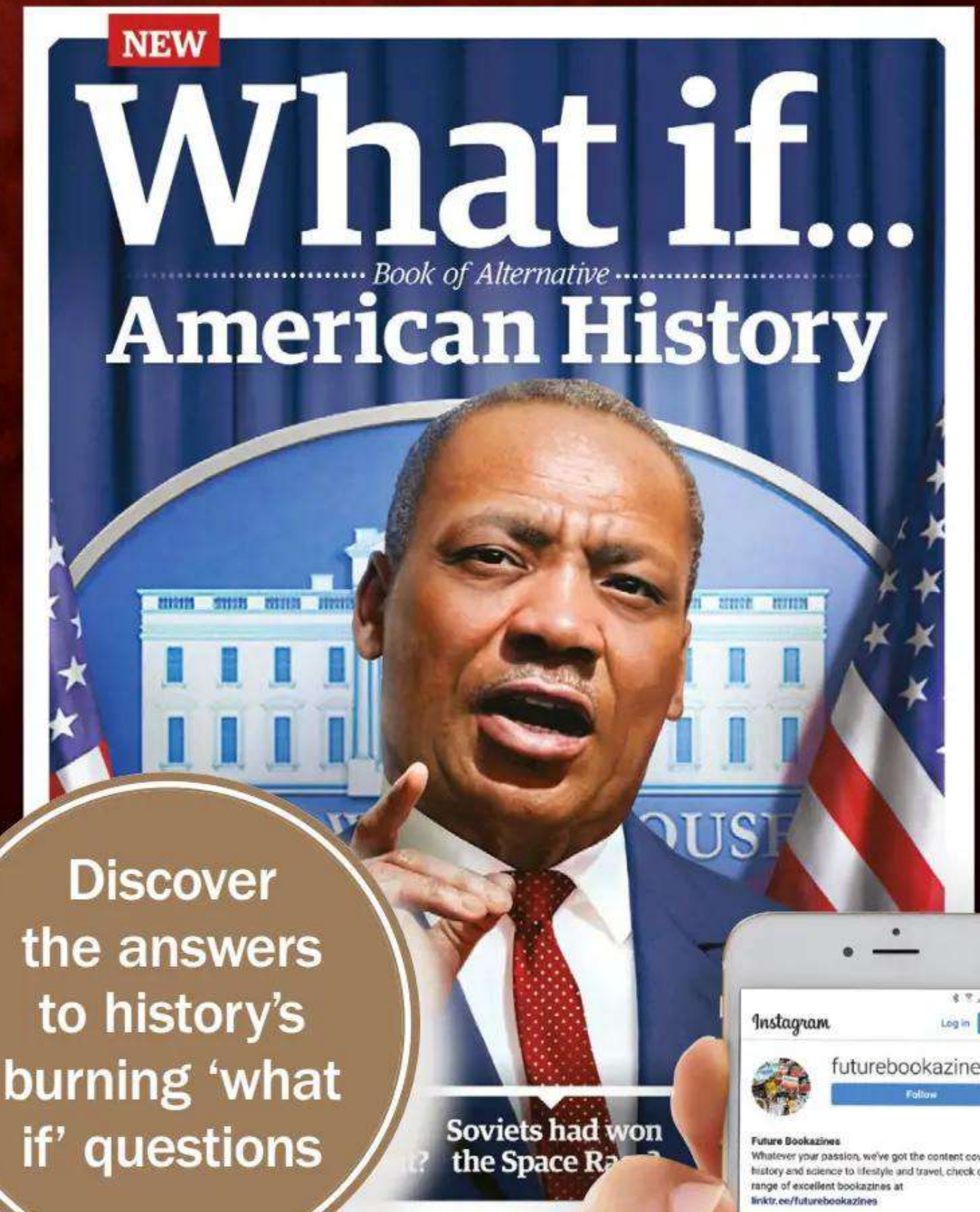
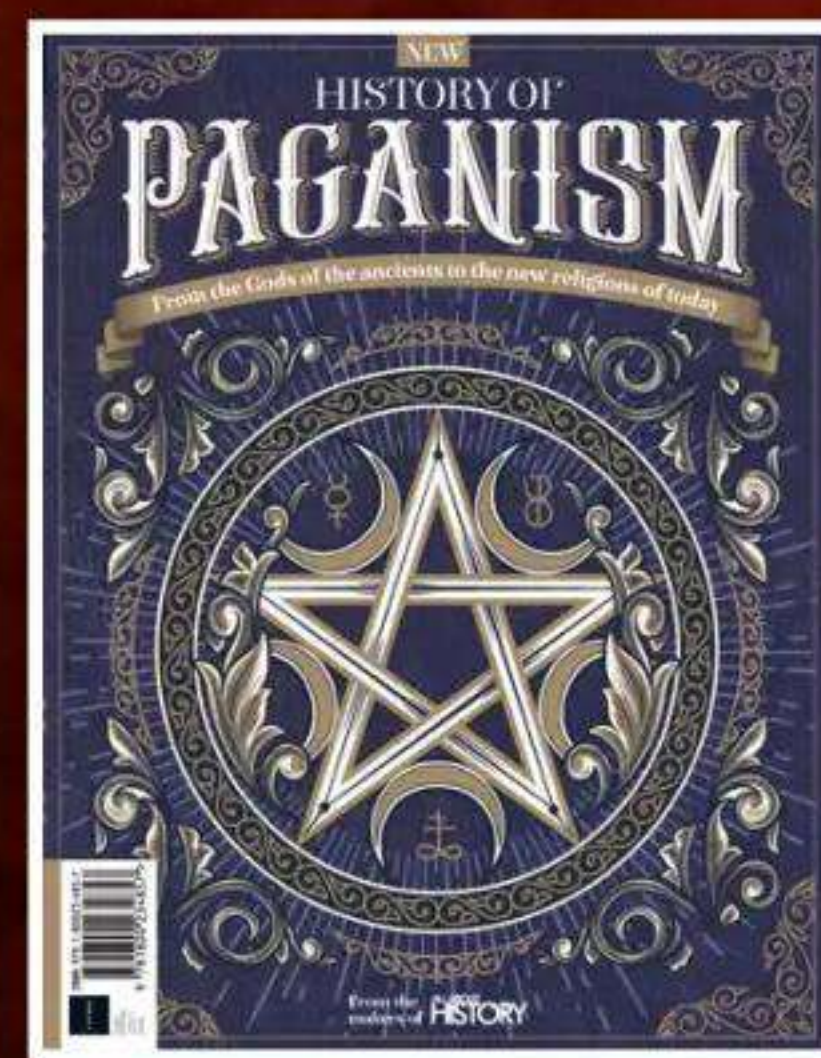
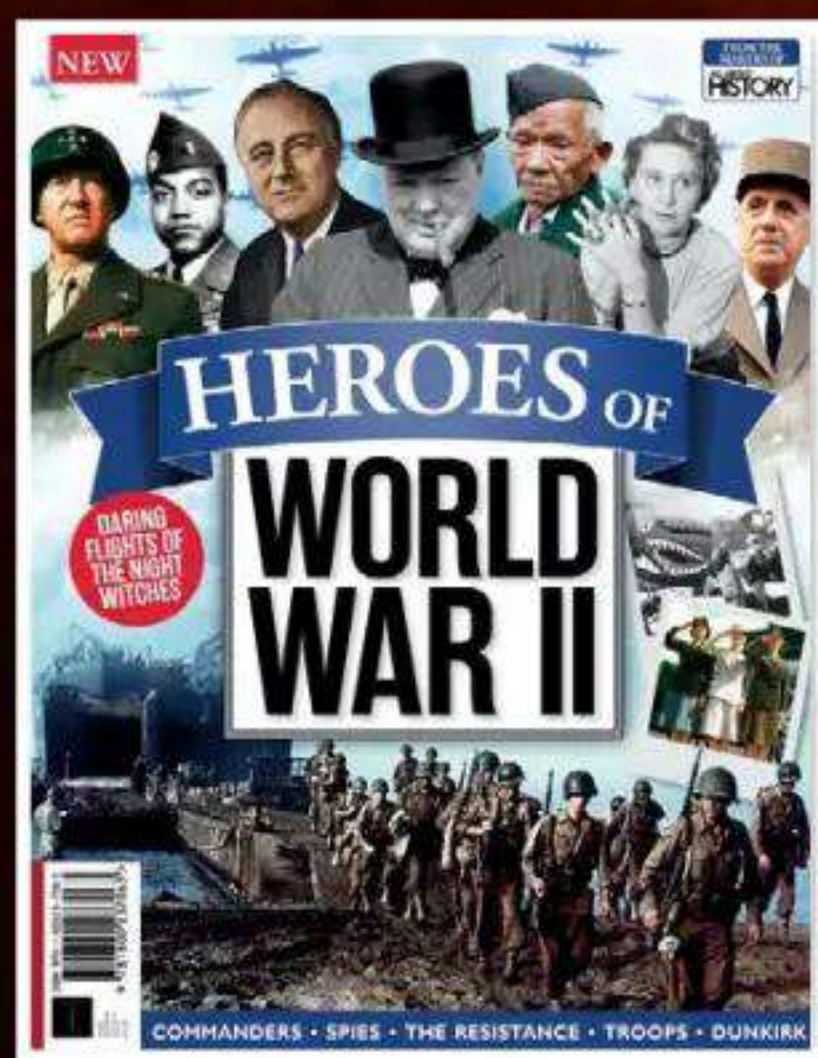
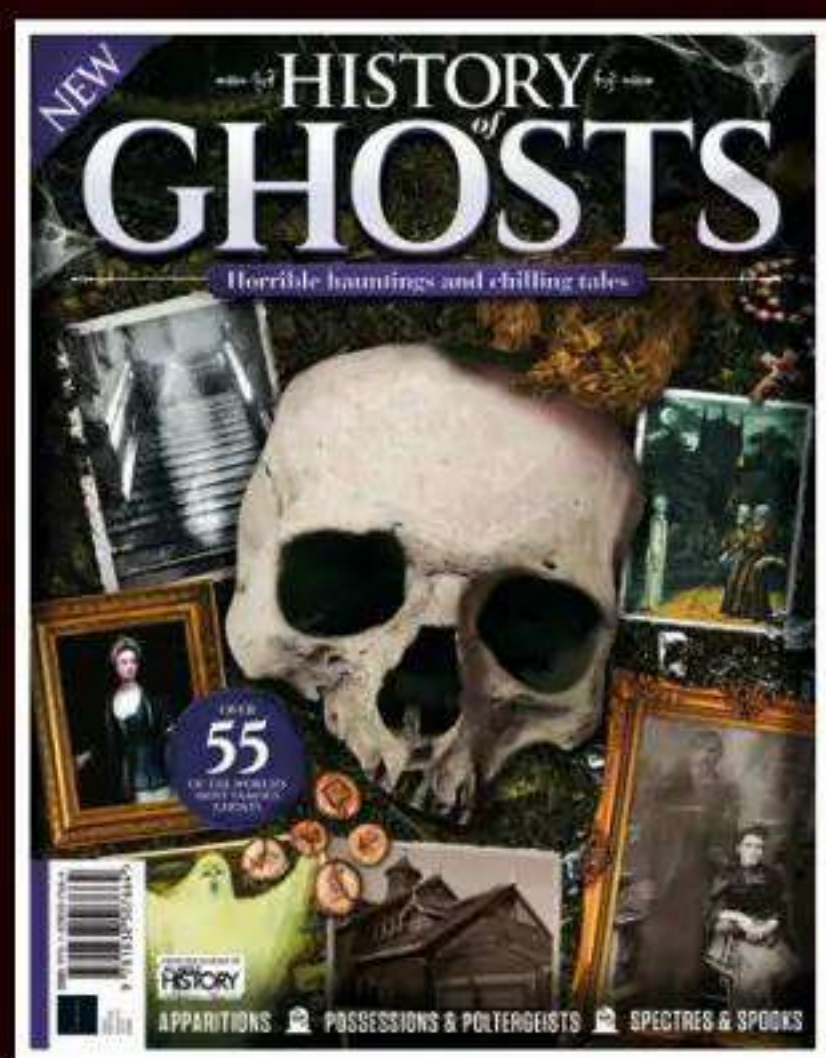


World-wide delivery and super-safe ordering



STEP BACK IN TIME WITH OUR HISTORY TITLES

Immerse yourself in a world of emperors, pioneers, conquerors and legends and discover the events that shaped humankind



Discover the answers to history's burning 'what if' questions



Follow us on Instagram  @futurebookazines



www.magazinesdirect.com/history
Magazines, back issues & bookazines.

SUBSCRIBE & SAVE UP TO 61%

Delivered direct to your door
or straight to your device



Choose from over 80 magazines and make great savings off the store price!

Binders, books and back issues also available

Simply visit www.magazinesdirect.com

✓ No hidden costs 🚚 Shipping included in all prices 🌐 We deliver to over 100 countries 🔒 Secure online payment



magazinesdirect.com
Official Magazine Subscription Store

WORLD'S DEADLIEST TWO WOMEN



TAYLOR SCHABUSINESS

KINKY SEX, DRUGS AND MENTAL ILLNESS TURNED A MONDAY NIGHT INTO A GRUESOME BLOODBATH



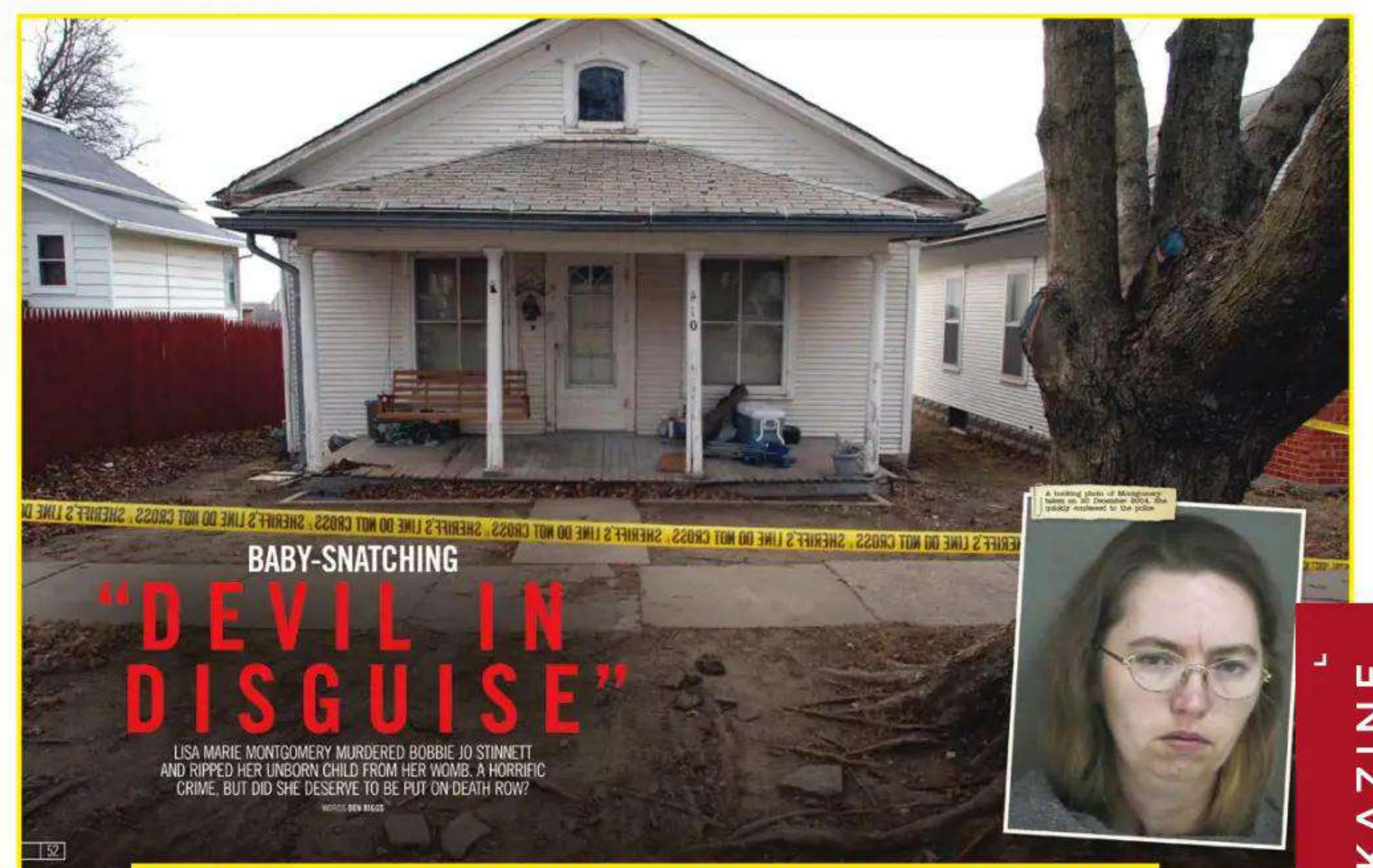
TAMARA SAMSONOVA

RUSSIA'S "GRANNY RIPPER" MURDERED 11, COOKED AND ATE THEIR BODY PARTS



MYRA HINDLEY

WHAT MADE HER JUST AS SADISTIC A KILLER AS HER LOVER AND VILE PARTNER?



LISA MARIE MONTGOMERY

SHE MURDERED A PREGNANT MOTHER AND RIPPED THE UNBORN CHILD FROM HER WOMB